The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

ROBERT C. HANEY

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is September 21, 2001. This is an interview with Robert C. Haney. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Let's start at the beginning. Tell me when and where you were born and something about your family.

HANEY: I was born in 1921 in Independence, Iowa, a town with a population of about 3,500. Both my mother and father had been to college. My father was an instructor in manual training at the local school. My mother was a housewife. She had been a teacher. My father was from Nebraska. He had been drafted into the Army during World War I, but served only in the United States. He was of Irish origin. My paternal grandfather was still alive when I was growing up. He had been a blacksmith. I remember going out with my father to light up the forge in the blacksmith shop behind my grandparents' house. My mother was Norwegian. Unfortunately, I did not learn Norwegian as a child because we were not living in a Norwegian community. She was born in the United States but did not learn English until she was about 14 years old. She lived in a small town in Iowa called Roland, where the schools, churches, shops, everything and everybody was Norwegian. My maternal grandfather never did learn English. You couldn't tell my mother had not always known it.

Q: Same with my family. My family spoke German but then stopped when I came along.

Where did your parents go to school?

HANEY: My father went to school through twelfth grade in Papillion, Nebraska. He went to college somewhere in that area initially and got a bachelor's degree. In those days you could get a job teaching with just a bachelor's degree. Now they push you to get a doctorate before they let you in a classroom. My father eventually went to summer school in Wisconsin, where he got a master's degree. My mother had a bachelor's degree.

Q: Where did she go?

HANEY: Somewhere in northern Iowa.

Q: What was Independence, Iowa, like?

HANEY: I lived there until the age of 17, when I went off to the University of Iowa, in Iowa City. Independence is a county seat. Following Cartesian principles, the surveyors had placed it squarely at the intersection of roads east-west, north-south. Just before the Great Depression, when money got scarce, the state and perhaps the federal government provided the money to pave those roads. Our house was the last one on East Main Street, the main road running east-west. If you continued east on that road for 90 miles, you would come to Dubuque. Farther east on the same road - now U.S. 20 - you'd come to Chicago, the "big town." Most residents of Independence had never seen the nearest big city.

In about 1926, I think it was, work crews brought road building equipment - graders and steam shovels and rollers - and began to work on the grade that went up to the bridge and over the creek in the pasture next to our house. (In those days, the word "bulldozer" would have conjured up an image of a Spaniard in knee pants with a black beret and waving a cape.) The paved road became a highway, and that really changed the nature of the relationship between town and country. Suddenly we were opened up to the world. Those were the years when mention of Chicago made you think of gangsters and the St. Valentine's Day massacre. From time to time it was rumored that a black touring car had come speeding into town, burning the only stop light at the intersection of our two roads and fleeing west to Waterloo. Gangsters, we thought.

Independence was the center of a farming community. There were probably as many students who came in from the farms to our schools as lived in town. There were about 75 students in my high school class of 1938.

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

HANEY: I had a brother who was five years younger than I and who is now dead.

Q: At home, was there much reading or sitting around talking about the world and that sort of thing?

HANEY: News about the United States, and occasionally the world, came mainly from radio station WHO in Des Moines, the state capital, which was also where our daily newspaper came from. When I became old enough, I was a "carrier salesman" for The Des Moines Register. I used to get up at 4:30 a.m. every morning and go down to the post office steps to pick up the bundle of newspapers trucked in from Des Moines overnight. I'd pack my bag, get on my bicycle, and deliver the paper before most people were awake. WHO was the outlet for "Dutch" (Ronald) Reagan, who was their sportscaster.

Q: Was Independence connected by railroad?

HANEY: Yes. It was the Illinois Central, which ran from Chicago through Independence and on out west. I don't know what its western terminal was. Independence had an opportunity to grow when Quaker Oats sought to establish a plant there. But the farm community thought that our town was a nice, quiet place and wanted to keep it that way. So Quaker Oats went south to Cedar Rapids. Earlier, a railroad more important and bigger than Illinois Central wanted to run through the town. But the town fathers, many of whom who had been farmers, decided against it.

I think my hometown's heyday was in the late 19th/early 20th century when it had a kite-shaped racetrack outside the town. It was shaped like a figure eight. It was a harness-racing track. The soil was particularly good for that, and there was an enormous barn next to the track that was still standing in my day. Harness racers came from as far away as Australia to race there. The local hotel was originally built to accommodate racing fans from far and wide. A horse-drawn trolley ran from the hotel down the middle of the cobblestone street and out to the racetrack.

As a boy, I was crazy about flying. I would occasionally get my chance to ride in a Ford trimotor when the local Ford dealer arranged for one to visit Independence, landing in a flat pasture outside the town. A 20-minute ride cost $1. From the air, you could still see in a cornfield the trace of the kite-shaped racetrack.

Q: Let's take the primary school. Do you recall any teachers or subjects that you particularly liked and disliked?

HANEY: I liked all of the subjects I took. I even put up with Palmer method penmanship. My father was on the faculty. He taught manual training and mechanical drawing. So I felt a little pressure to keep my grades up.

Q: And your mother being an ex-schoolteacher.

HANEY: I was monitored, yes.

Q: In high school and before, were there any sports or activities that you were particularly interested in?

HANEY: Yes. The high school had a football team that played local teams from nearby towns. I tried out for football and broke my nose. We also had a basketball team that once went to the state championships held in Cedar Falls, where there was a normal school with a big gymnasium. I remember going to the first game of the championship. We lost. The only other time I was ever in that gymnasium was some years later when I went to a recital by Jan Paderewski. You can tell I'm a name-dropper.

Q: Were there any particular books or genre of books that you got involved with?

HANEY: I read almost anything I could get my hands on. We had an old-fashioned mahogany china closet that stood in the room we called the "parlor." But the china closet didn't hold china - it was used for bookshelves. It held a whole set of Kipling's works. I remember reading his stories. I was particularly interested in his stories about English encounters with Russian soldiers in an area that is of renewed interest these days, the Khyber Pass, and his description of the language as "hissing, purring, spitting Russian." That so intrigued me that subsequently I tried to take a course in Russian when I went to the university. But they didn't offer it. Some years later, when war needs required Russian speakers, I did take Russian for a year at the University of Iowa. It was a special intensive course - nothing but Russian for two semesters.

Q: You were ready to graduate from high school when?

HANEY: I graduated in '38.

Q: How did the Depression hit you all?

HANEY: It was quite painful and quite obvious. Most obvious was how it hit the farmers. Many of them did not own their own farms. They were paying on a mortgage. When the banks began to close and called in the mortgages to take over the farms, that was a very sad scene. There was also disruption in the market for farm products. We had a dairy in town, and the farmers would haul their cans of milk in to the dairy. When they couldn't get what they thought was a fair price - the dairy was in trouble too - some of the farmers simply dumped the milk into the creek. Foreclosings happened every month. My father had a salary of something like $2,000 a year, and the schoolboard cut that back to $1,600. Dad had just bought our first car, a Model A Ford. He was paying for it, as we all did for almost everything, on time. He had to go to the Ford garage in town and say, "I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to give your car back because I can't keep up the payments." The man who ran the garage said, "Well, it's not going to do me any good to have a Ford sitting here I won't be able to sell, so let's work this out somehow so you'll keep the car and I'll get something." We kept the car. But it was a tight period. A constant stream of jobless men rode the rails coming out from Chicago. They would jump off at Independence and then walk the streets knocking on doors to ask for a sandwich.

Q: You graduated in '38. What were you thinking of doing?

HANEY: Well, I grew up in the years immediately after World War I, and I was much taken by the stories of that war and our participation in it. The American Legion turned out in uniforms to parade on July Fourth and on what was then called Armistice Day, now Veterans' Day. So I thought the greatest thing would be to go to West Point and become an officer. That was when I was six or seven years old. By the time I grew a little bit older, I had to be put in the front seat of the classroom because I couldn't see the writing on the blackboard. It became apparent that my eyesight was probably not good enough to get me into West Point. I found another icon, a man who had been an engineer. I decided that I wanted to become a civil engineer. That icon was Herbert Hoover, a civil engineer born in West Branch, Iowa. Independence was mostly Republican. There was a small Catholic population, many of whom were Democrats. But the town was solidly Republican, as was the state. I thought, "What I'll do is go to Stanford and take engineering."

Q: That's where Hoover went.

HANEY: Yes. But sending me to Stanford was way beyond our means, particularly after the Depression. So I went to the State University of Iowa, where the tuition for a resident of the state was $50 a semester. During the summer before my freshman classes began, I worked nine hours a day, seven days a week in the university hospital dishwashing room earning not money, but credit for all my meals during the school year.

When we were interviewed by one of the deans after we had checked in as freshmen, I expressed my interest in taking engineering. The dean said, "Liberal arts is a very precious thing. Why don't you take the five-year course, which will give you a liberal arts degree as well as an engineering degree?" I allowed myself to be talked into that and never did get into engineering. Come to think of it, it was probably the dean of liberal arts who interviewed me.

Q: How did you find the outside world? You were at the University of Iowa from '38 to when? Did you graduate from there?

HANEY: I did eventually, but during the 1939-'40 school year I had unfortunately been paying too much attention to certain classes and not enough to others. I would register for a class and go to one session and then sort of forget about it and concentrate on the classes I liked. At the end of my sophomore year I was invited to leave. More crudely put, I flunked out. That summer I joined up with a friend from my home town, a high school classmate, and we hit the road.

Q: This was when?

HANEY: This was in the early summer of 1940. My buddy and I got jobs initially at Burlington, Iowa, where there is a high bluff on the right bank of the Mississippi stretching out flat to the west. With entry into World War II an increasingly likely possibility, the government was building a shell-loading plant at Burlington. I worked for the "commissary company" that provided food and barracks for the workers. By the end of the summer we had earned enough money to go to California by train, sitting up for three days and nights in a coach. I got one job after another in Los Angeles and eventually ended up at The Los Angeles Times, where I worked in the "morgue," the editorial library. I was in Los Angeles on Pearl Harbor Day in 1941. I thought I should try to get a bachelor's degree before I was drafted. So I went back to the University of Iowa, and they let me return. But this time, I was a student of Russian - full time. The American Council of Learned Societies had been asked by the U.S. government to set up and run a pilot project of intensive teaching of languages that were not widely offered in the United States, like Chinese, Japanese, Russian. Fortunately, I knew a former German professor from SUI who was put in charge of the whole program. There were pilot projects at Columbia, Chicago, California Berkeley, and at Iowa, because that was the professor's old school. I got a scholarship. So I studied only Russian from the fall of 1942 to the spring of '43. We were a small group of students - eight in the first semester and six in the second. We had three excellent, well-trained, experienced, native-speaking Russians who taught us. I got a very good start on Russian at the University of Iowa, of all places.

Q: Then what happened?

HANEY: When I had finished the spring semester and the course in Russian, I went to my draft board in Independence, Iowa, the county seat of Buchanan County, and said, "Okay, I'm ready." I'd had a deferment because of college. I had not finished my degree yet, but I was anxious to get into the armed services. Most of my friends at the university or in Independence were already serving. The draft board sent me to Camp Dodge, near Des Moines, I was inducted and sent to North Carolina to Fort Bragg, where I trained initially in the field artillery. I finished there in mid-1943.

At that time, the Army had set up the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP). The captain in charge of our battery at Fort Bragg called me into his office one day and said, "You have been selected to go to ASTP." I had been trained as a gunner on a 105 howitzer, and I knew all the guys in my battery well. Most of them were college kids about my age. I didn't want to go to ASTP. I wanted to stay with my battery. The captain, who was pretty literal minded, said, "Well, it's quite clear that if you have a score of 110 or above on the Army General Classification Test, you must go to ASTP." (Actually, the score was set as a threshold, but if you had 110, going to ASTP wasn't mandatory.) I was pulled from the battery and sent to an ASTP staging facility at Clemson College in South Carolina. When I got there, they tested my French. Looking at my college record, they decided that I was eligible to go to the graduate level of ASTP. Instead of being sent out within three days to a training camp or a school, I was kept at Clemson awaiting a program that hadn't been set up yet at the graduate level. That was awkward, because Clemson was a staging area where the GIs coming in were normally screened, processed and shipped out in a matter of days. The "graduate level" of ASTP wasn't up and running. Meanwhile, I didn't get paid, I couldn't get a pass, I had to do my laundry in a men's room at the dormitory. To keep me occupied, the commanding officer put me on the cadre to interview self-declared French speakers to see whether they could really speak French.

After about six weeks of marking time, the CO called me in and told me, "We have something for you at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. A certain Father Walsh is working up a program at the graduate level. That's where you're going." So I got on a train and came up to Georgetown. Two other GIs from Clemson came with me. We were quartered in the first building on the right as you go in the main gate. I guess it's still a dormitory.

Father Walsh interviewed us to determine how we might be usefully employed while we waited. To that end, he drew on his broad contacts throughout the city to find temporary jobs that would match our various qualifications. One day, he called me in and said, "I know the officer who runs the Soviet section in military intelligence at the Pentagon" (a building then scarcely two years old). "So I've made an appointment for you to go over and see him."

I went to the Pentagon and saw the colonel. After the interview he said, "Fine, we can use somebody to translate from Russian." I was shown the spacious room where the desks were occupied by officers and a few civilians. I was a private first class (a promotion I had received automatically when I was assigned to the graduate level of ASTP). I reported to the Pentagon for duty the next day. I began translating field manuals in Russian on "The Loading of Military Echelons on Rolling Stock" and "Mounting a 50-caliber Machine Gun on a Saddle Using the Horse on the Ground for Cover." Our military attachï¿½s picked up such items God knows where; they certainly weren't "Top Secret."

I had been busily translating for several weeks when one day an officer approached my desk. I didn't stand up - everybody in uniform in that room was an officer except me. The officer asked me, "Where's the nearest latrine, soldier?" (The Pentagon was a confusing building.) The officer had emphasized "soldier" because I was the only enlisted man in the room. I said, "Well, Sir, if you go out into the corridor and turn left, it's about 10 yards down on the right." As he walked away I could see what was on his shoulders: two stars on each. (It turned out he was Major General Strong, G-2 of the Army.)

The colonel called me in the next day and said, "General Strong asked me what an enlisted man was doing in your section. We've got to get you under cover somehow." I asked, "What do you intend to do, Sir?" He said, "We'll send you up to Camp Ritchie," which was the Military Intelligence Training Center in Maryland. (It later became Fort Ritchie and is now closed.) "Then we'll make you a warrant officer, and as a warrant officer you can serve here." I said, "But Sir, don't you have to pass a test to become a warrant officer?" "Yes," the colonel replied. "I'll give it to you myself." So I got orders transferring me to Camp Ritchie. The colonel told me, "Just lie low up there. We'll keep you in the casual company," which was where they first put you before you were assigned to a class, or a "cycle," as they called them.

In a casual company, you do nothing but KP, or ash-and-trash, or night firing (keeping the barracks warm overnight). That was my introduction to Camp Ritchie. After several weeks of casual duties, I had heard nothing from the colonel. I tried to get a pass. The casual company wasn't supposed to give passes. The master sergeant in charge of the company was Man Mountain Dean, the wrestler. The company clerk, a corporal, was the son of the owner of Blackie's House of Beef in Washington, DC. The command staff at Ritchie was very interested in persons in the service connected with good places to eat. Through those connections, they obtained food for the officers' mess not readily available in most restaurants, certainly not in an army mess. The officers' mess at Camp Ritchie was perhaps one of the best anywhere in the country. I knew this because at the Pentagon I'd heard officers talking about driving up to Ritchie for Sunday lunch.

I eventually discovered that in order to get a pass if you were in the casual company, you had to sign up with the company clerk and pay him for a ride to Washington and back. He was operating a small fleet of cars.

So I signed up, got a weekend pass, was driven to Washington, streaked to the Pentagon, and discovered that my colonel was in Teheran. He had been chosen to accompany President Roosevelt to Iran, where FDR and Churchill were meeting with Stalin about invasion plans (November 1943). Nobody knew (or was saying) when the colonel would be back.

I returned to Ritchie that Sunday and talked Man Mountain Dean and his superiors into putting my card - which had been pulled at the colonel's request - back in the training cycle file. I was duly assigned to the 16th cycle with a group of French interpreters. On the day you graduated, you learned what would happen to you. In one day I went from PFC to ranking noncom (master sergeant) in a military intelligence interpreting team. Some people went from PFC to second lieutenant overnight.

In July of '44, my team was sent to Boston, where we boarded a troop ship to join a convoy. That meant that it took us almost two weeks to cross the Atlantic because we had to move at the speed of the slowest ship. We came in from the north down through the Irish Sea to Liverpool. We debarked and went to Birmingham, changed trains, and continued on to the small town of Broadway, "the Gateway to the Cotswolds." That was where the headquarters of military intelligence was located until it moved across the Channel to a suburb of Paris.

Q: Did you go to France?

HANEY: Yes, eventually. We waited about three or four weeks at Broadway for an assignment to a unit. We had left Camp Ritchie as a team, headed by a captain whose name was Zing, an Alsatian name. Captain Zing had been a trumpet player in a jazz band. A lieutenant was second in command. We had a staff sergeant. I was a master sergeant. We had two corporals. There were six of us on the team altogether. One day, the captain got orders, in a sealed envelope for reasons that escape me. He was told to take the two jeeps assigned to us and all of our equipment and get on the road. When we had proceeded several kilometers, the captain took a look in the envelope, and we followed the instructions it contained. We ended up at a place called Ogbourne St. George. I was dismayed to see that at the gate of the military headquarters in that small town there was a soldier on guard wearing airborne insignia. We had been assigned to an airborne unit, the XVIII Airborne Corps, Major General Matthew B. Ridgway commanding. His headquarters didn't have any need for a French-speaking team right then, so I was assigned as the ranking noncom in the military intelligence (G-2) section. I worked directly for the G-2, Colonel Whitfield Jack, a former West Pointer who had resigned his commission and gone to law school. When the war came along he went back into service. He was from Shreveport, Louisiana, and a former associate of Huey Long. Colonel Jack was my boss throughout the war.

Q: What were you doing?

HANEY: Once we got into combat, in the Battle of the Bulge, I was in charge of nightly production of the G-2 report compiled from G-2 reports from headquarters of the three American divisions under corps command. Those were the 17th Airborne Division, the 82nd Airborne Division, and the 101st Airborne Division. Intelligence officers on our staff wrote the Corps G-2 report, which we had to produce by early morning. It was typed on stencils and mimeographed. Often, there would also be map overlays on clear acetate. Colonel Jack would occasionally send an officer out with a jeep and driver to round up as much acetate as he could find at division headquarters. Thanks to Colonel Jack's zeal, the G-2 section lugged heavy chests of acetate through France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. At the height of the Battle of the Bulge, we were putting out a 31-page G-2 report with six overlays, if you can imagine that. My job was to produce the report, see to it that everything was proofread, that it was run off and assembled properly, and ready for the colonel in the morning. Colonel Jack would arrive at our field headquarters around 7:00 a.m. His first words were always, "What's the deelay in the repoht this moanin', Sahjint?"

Q: How did the Battle of the Bulge hit you?

HANEY: As I've mentioned, I was with the XVIII Airborne Corps. We had the 82nd, 101st, and 17th American airborne divisions under our command.

Q: What happened? The 101st and 82nd are well known, and they had both taken part in the Market Garden campaign in the Netherlands.

HANEY: Oh, yes - "A Bridge too Far."

Q: Were you involved in that?

HANEY: Yes, at an early stage and only peripherally. It was Monty's [Field Marshal Montgomery's] show. The XVIII Airborne Corps was still in England. Three airborne divisions were to be deployed - the British 1st and the American 82nd and 101st divisions. The Americans weren't too happy about that because they had fought in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, and then in the Normandy landings. They were hoping to get a little bit of a rest. But they were told, "It's just for three days. The British forces will finish it off." Of course, you know what happened.

Then we moved to France. Our first headquarters was at Reims in what had been a boys' school. It was a big quadrangle with a courtyard in the middle. On the second story looking out on the courtyard was a balcony. I was responsible for nighttime security in the map room on that floor. I used to sleep there on a cot at night, my loaded carbine on the floor beside the cot, and a bottle of Mumm champagne hung out the exterior window on a stout cord. A late fall chill accompanied the sunset, and we didn't have other means of cooling that most famous product of Champagne Province, of which Reims was a principal city.

The school was quite comfortable because it had its own dormitory, dining room and kitchen - and squat toilets. In all, the best quarters I had seen since I was inducted. But one day, as I was coming out of the map room onto the balcony, I bumped into an officer, which in itself was not unusual. But this officer was a general. It was General Bedell Smith, Eisenhower's chief of staff. I asked myself, "What the hell is he doing here?" A couple of weeks later, I looked out in the courtyard, and down there were a couple of six-by-six Army trucks. They were loaded with toilet bowls. I knew that we were not long for those comfortable digs. The school became SHAEF headquarters. That is where the German capitulation was signed on May 7, 1945.

I have not been back to Reims, but I can't help wondering whether that fateful event took place in the map room where I had slept. News correspondents writing at the time about SHAEF headquarters and VE Day frequently called the boys' school "the little red schoolhouse." It wasn't little, and the brick walls were not markedly red. But the description made good copy.

SHAEF displaced the XVIII Airborne Corps headquarters to Epernay, on the Marne River south of Reims. The 101st and 82nd airborne divisions were pulled out of Market Garden in the Netherlands after weeks, not days, as they had been promised. They were moved to the area around Reims, expecting some well-earned downtime. The 17th Airborne, which had been assigned to the XVIII Airborne Corps, was a brand new airborne division with no combat experience. In December 1944 it was still training in England. General Ridgway had flown to England to observe the training exercises.

XVIII Corps headquarters got word in Epernay on the 16th of December 1944 that the Germans had attacked Belgium and Luxembourg. Soon thereafter, we learned that XVIII Corps was being sent to the front, if the higher echelons could figure out where that was. I was detailed to go with the advance headquarters group, traveling without winter gear in one staff car, one jeep and one six-by-six truck. Thus for me began the Battle of the Bulge.

From Epernay we headed northeast into Belgium, the only American convoy moving in that direction. Most U.S. units had cleared out earlier. At about midday we arrived in Bastogne, where American VIII Corps headquarters was supposed to be. It had already pulled up stakes and left; only a quartermaster baking company remained in town, and they were packing their ovens. So we continued on toward Houffalize, about 25 km. to the north, where we were to meet General Ridgway, who was flying over from England to resume command of the corps. When we got within a few kilometers of Houffalize the staff car received a radio message saying, "Don't go into Houffalize, the Germans have taken it. Meet Ridgway in Bastogne." We hastily turned around and headed back, hoping not to run into German troops. Fortunately, we didn't, because they were advancing on east-west roads, and we were traveling south. We didn't dally at the intersections.

When we got back to Bastogne it was turning dark, and a heavy mist covered the hills like a shroud. We took turns walking around our vehicles, which we had put in a large shed open at both ends. There were no other American troops in Bastogne that night. It was very eerie. We could hear the clank of German armor muffled in the mist. And we could see the blurred halos from German signal flares. At about 4:30 a.m., in came General Ridgway in a jeep. He had flown over to an airfield nearby. At first light, we headed west on the only road left open in and out of Bastogne. As we pulled out of town, we met the 101st Airborne troops walking in on both sides of the road to be surrounded. We went up north to Werbomont, with the 82nd Airborne division. We remained committed throughout the Battle of the Bulge, went into Germany and through Aachen, and then returned to our headquarters in Epernay.

Q: Were you more or less doing staff support work by this time rather than language work?

HANEY: I was doing some interpreting when we were in Belgium. But my main job was seeing to it that that damned G-2 report was ready for distribution by 7:00 a.m. I was the equivalent of the production editor on a daily paper.

Q: What was your impression of the Battle of the Bulge? Were things pretty chaotic?

HANEY: They were chaotic at the beginning. When we had made our way in the staff car, jeep and truck up to meet the general, the few American vehicles we passed were going in the other direction. The Belgians were glad to see us heading toward the front and brought out fresh eggs to give us when we stopped to check our bearings. I hadn't seen a fresh egg in more than a year. We didn't have any company at Bastogne until the 101st started to trek in.

The Germans pushed very hard. They were launching hundreds of the V-1 "flying bombs" propelled by a ram-jet engine. They had used them earlier in England. Their target was the port of Antwerp. One of our first field headquarters in Belgium was in a chateau fairly high on a hill. The V-1s were launched from the Eifel, a plateau region in West Germany northeast of Luxembourg. So many of the "flying bombs" failed off the launchpad that the German civilians called them the "Eifel-Schreck" ("Eifel terror"). We used to get 40 or 50 V-1s overhead every day on their way to Liï¿½ge and Antwerp. They flew so low you could easily see them. When they came over, you hoped you would keep hearing the flatulent sound of the ram jet when the V-1 had passed. If the sound stopped, you knew that it was coming down. The V-1s were designed to power-dive onto the target, but that never worked. They came down when they ran out of fuel.

Q: What happened after the Battle of the Bulge?

HANEY: We returned to Epernay and began preparing to participate in a Montgomery "set piece" (as airborne General Gavin called it). It was to be a major assault across the Rhine in late March 1945. On the night of March 23-24, British troops of the 30 Corps crossed to the right bank within minutes of entering the river near the small town of Rees. At 10:00 a.m. on March 24, paratroopers and gliders of the British 6th Airborne and the American 17th Airborne began landing across the Rhine near Wesel, Germany, in an assault that lasted two-and-a-half hours.

For a week before the drop, I had been in Xanten, a small town in the Netherlands across the Rhine from Wesel, as part of the advance headquarters of XVIII Airborne Corps. From the ground near the left bank of the Rhine, we watched the seemingly endless train of troop carriers and C-47s towing gliders pass low overhead. I later learned that we were in good company: Somewhere nearby, Prime Minister Churchill and General Eisenhower also observed that awesome spectacle. Then our headquarters personnel waddled across the Rhine in a "Duck," an amphibious vehicle that could carry a jeep and a trailer as well as troops. Not very spectacular, but less scary than a glider (for which I was qualified after declining to practice something you have to do perfect the first time - bail out of a C-47 with a parachute).

A few days after the Rhine crossing, we were flown back to corps base headquarters in Epernay. Then we were committed to the Rhineland campaign. Patton was moving at such a pace it was hard to keep up with him. Our forces encircled and took thousands of German prisoners. A typical sign placed by advancing troops on the side of a road would be, "Mines Cleared to Shoulders Only." Patton's troops planted signs that read, "Krauts Cleared to Shoulders Only." I spent one night sleeping on the damp concrete floor of a cheese factory at Muenster. I can still smell it.

After the Ruhr pocket was sealed, we returned again for a few days to our base camp at Epernay to await the next assignment. It was to join the British in North Germany under the command of Field Marshal Montgomery. We ended up at a town called Hagenow, in Mecklenburg Province, east of Hamburg and south of Schwerin. The Schwerinersee is a lake like an hourglass, pinched in the middle, where Schwerin is located. Our "restraining line" ran roughly north-south through the middle of the Schwerinersee. When we reached that line, we were ordered to wait until the Soviets came up to their restraining line to the east; the two lines were separated by a no-man's-land. The Soviet forces were pushing hard, chasing thousands of German troops into our lines every day. By the time the Germans reached our line of restraint they had no weapons with them.

We were no longer moving. At last we had some time on our hands. A couple of days before VE Day, somebody suggested, foolishly perhaps, "Let's go out and see if we can collect a few Lugers." Four of us in two jeeps crossed the bridge over the Schwerinersee and headed east. At first, all we saw coming toward us were hordes of German soldiers in no regular formation, just slugging along, no weapons, anxious to surrender to the Americans. We told them to keep going west. Pretty soon, we began meeting Germans still carrying rifles and pistols. We told the Germans, "Throw your rifles in the ditch. Give us your pistols." We piled the floor of the jeeps with German sidearms. Then, as we went further east, we saw incoming mortar fire in the distance. We figured that must be the Soviets approaching. We had run out of Germans; they had disappeared behind us.

We hastily turned around and headed back on the road west toward the bridge at Schwerin. As we came up on a rise, we saw four soldiers in German uniform jumping up and down and wildly waving their arms, indicating we should stop. I thought we were in for it this time. When we got up close they turned out to be American prisoners of war who had been given German uniforms in the POW camp. When the camp was abandoned by the Germans, these guys had taken off across the fields. Other than POWs, we were the first Americans they had seen since they had been captured. We squeezed them into the two jeeps and drove on back to Schwerin.

Q: I take it that by that time the war was over.

HANEY: Yes. The war ended on May 8, 1945. On the edge of Hagenow, where we had our final field headquarters, great numbers of German POWs filled farmers' fields, fenced in by the barbed wire that had once confined cattle. A few GIs with M-1s kept an eye on them. Never before or since have I seen anybody so beat as those prisoners. I can imagine that part of their apparent lack of affect stemmed from the conflict in their hearts and souls between the anguish of defeat and capture, on the one hand, and on the other, the great relief they felt at falling into American hands instead of being taken prisoner by the Soviets.

Another war's-end experience that I shall never forget was an up-close, wrenching exposure to what the guards at a German concentration camp had left behind when they fled as we approached. The American 82nd Airborne Division had come upon a German concentration camp at Wi¿½bbelin, about 25 km. east of Hagenow. When the 82nd found it, there were about 3,500 persons still there, many of them dead. The American forces obliged the citizens at Hagenow and at Ludwigslust, where the 82nhad its headquarters, to dig graves for the dead. At Ludwigslust, they were dug in the park in front of the palace once inhabited by the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. In Hagenow, the graves were dug in the town square. The bodies, without coffins or shrouds, were placed in the ground, and the local citizens were then made to walk in a long line past the graves.

Q: The war was over in Europe. What did you do?

HANEY: Because the Airborne units were expecting that they might have to go to the Pacific, we flew back to Epernay about a week after the war ended in Europe, but not before General Ridgway had the notion of exchanging medals with the commander of the Soviet corps facing us. We knew a great deal about the German order of battle, down to the names of commanding officers at the lower echelons. But we had very little information about the Soviets - the identity of the corps across from us was about it.

While we were waiting to get orders to go back to our base camp, the general sent a small party under the command of a major to wend its way across no-man's-land to the headquarters of the Soviet corps facing us on the east. The major thought he had set it up pretty well by field telephone. So the group headed out early one bright May morning. It was soon halted at a Soviet roadblock by soldiers who asked, in effect, "Where do you think you're going?" The Americans explained that they had already been cleared to go to the Soviet corps headquarters. But the officer in charge of the roadblock said, "We'll have to confirm this." So a lot of time was spent cranking a field telephone. Meanwhile, the Soviets brought out bottles of a clear liquid that we had seen before in liberated refugee camps. It was called "buzz-bomb juice," a mixture of ethyl alcohol, said to be a fuel component in the V-1 "flying bombs," and water - about 50/50.

The major and his party never did get to Soviet corps headquarters. There were two more roadblocks, and by then so much buzz-bomb juice had been consumed that the mission had to be aborted. The general was highly displeased. So the G-2, Whitfield Jack, my boss, called me and said that the general was very unhappy that the major hadn't accomplished his mission. He was sending the same group out tomorrow with stern orders to get the medal swap set up. "We think it might be helpful to have somebody along who speaks Russian," Colonel Jack said. "Since you profess to speak the language, Sahjint, you will go with the major."

At 0700 hours the next morning, off the party went again, this time with an interpreter. At the first roadblock, it was the same story as the day before. While waiting to establish communication with higher authority, out came the buzz-bomb juice. But the major, who had a bad hangover, said, "Not me." We finally got to what turned out to be the main Soviet checkpoint, where a barber-pole-striped barrier halted all traffic. A Soviet major wearing a smart pair of breeches and boots and with a German pistol on his hip emerged from a farmhouse at the side of the road. When we explained our mission, he said, "I'll have to check this with higher authority." He cranked a field telephone, then handed it to one of the teenage Soviet soldiers to wait for the call to go through. I never in my life saw a youngster listen so hard.

Meanwhile, the Soviet major invited us into a plain room in the farmhouse, possibly once a sitting room. It had a wooden floor, a table and several chairs. We sat, and the major disappeared. Pretty soon, a Soviet soldier brought a tray with some sausage and black bread and large empty tumblers. The major then joined us, carrying a bottle of clear liquid. He started pouring. Immediately, my major said to me urgently, "Tell him that I can't drink anything, because I was on the road here yesterday, and the general was very displeased that I came back drunk."

I was dismayed at the thought of having to tell a Soviet major that a paratroop officer of the XVIII Airborne Corps couldn't tip his glass to "mir i druzhba" ["peace and friendship"]. There was a pause. The Soviet major looked at me, awaiting the translation, and finally asked, "What did he say?" I said, "Well, my major says that, as the interpreter, I may not drink anything." So the major got his dose of buzz-bomb juice, and I was happily spared the sauce. I trust that the statute of limitations has expired.

In due course, we did get clearance and pushed on to Soviet corps headquarters. We met the Soviet chief of staff, Colonel Sheremetev, a name prominent in Russian history, and the exchange of medals was agreed upon. Like my glider wings, I imagine the medal is in a shoebox in somebody's closet now.

Q: I guess everybody in this Airborne corps was thinking that this wasn't the end, that Japan was coming up.

HANEY: That's right. Everybody, not just in the airborne, but ordinary GIs in every unit were concerned that they might be sent to the Asian theater. A point system had been established giving credit for the time you'd served and length of engaged commitment. For a certain number of points, depending on your military specialty, you were eligible for discharge. The replacement depots that had been set up became redeployment depots. I feared that because of my military specialty, military intelligence, and my experience with the Airborne, I might be sent to Asia. I was detached from the XVIII Airborne Corps and sent back to Military Intelligence Headquarters, then still at Le Vï¿½sinet on the outskirts of Paris.

Luckily, I had learned of an opportunity to take Army-sponsored courses at the university in Dijon. I applied, was accepted, and went down to the Universitï¿½ de Dijon for three months. I lived in the dormitory, took courses in French literature, drank good French wine, and became acquainted with the region. The course over, I took the train for Paris, headed for Le Vï¿½sinet and discovered that MI headquarters had moved to Bad Schwalbach in Germany. I got back on a train, at the Gare de l'Est this time, and headed back into Germany. My records hadn't caught up with me, and I was still concerned about the risk of being sent to the Pacific. I learned that an Army University had been set up in Biarritz. There were not enough ships available to send all the GIs home who were eligible for discharge, so the Army had devised ways to occupy the troops who were waiting.

I applied for Biarritz, was accepted and once again dodged the possibility that I would go to the Pacific Theater. The war ended in August as I was on the train going down to Biarritz, where I attended the Army University for three months, taking college algebra and brushing up my Russian. By then I was free of the threat of the Pacific. Going through Paris on my way to a redeployment depot in Namur, Belgium, I stopped off for a few days' leave. That gave me the chance to look for a job in Paris. I got an offer from the French wire service, the Agence Europï¿½enne de Presse (AEP). I went on to Namur, where the GIs on their way home were housed in the barracks of a permanent Belgian army post. I applied for my discharge in Europe. Then I spent about two months in the redeployment depot waiting for my papers to travel by surface to Washington and back. I was discharged on Washington's Birthday, 1946, and took the next train to Paris. There I began work at the AEP, still wearing a uniform, but now sporting "a ruptured duck" on my Eisenhower jacket.

Q: "Ruptured duck" being the insignia showing you were discharged.

HANEY: Right. It was a gold eagle, but GIs called it "a ruptured duck." When you got that patch, you "took off like a ruptured duck."

Q: How did you get your connection to the wire service?

HANEY: In Paris the newspaper business was in upheaval because the postwar French had purged anybody suspected of dealings with the enemy during the occupation. New publications seemed to spring up like weeds. When I got to Paris as a new employee of the French wire service there were 35 to 40 daily newspapers in the city, few of them run by an experienced professional.

On my way from Biarritz to Namur, I had stopped briefly in Paris, as I mentioned. I found my way to the Paris bureau of the London Sunday Times, where I met the bureau chief. He didn't have a job for me, but he told me, "There's a new wire service in town called the Agence Europï¿½enne de Presse. I think they want to start an English section." So I went down to the AEP offices near the Opï¿½ra and talked my way in to see one of the editors. He had been a schoolteacher and apparently didn't know much about newspaper work. I told him, "Look, I'm here only on leave. I'm going to be discharged shortly." He said, "Fine. As soon as you come back, you have a job."

My job was to take AEP's French copy and translate and adapt it for transmission in English. AEP was a favored agency because it was socialist. It was in their offices that I met Lï¿½on Blum, the great man of French socialism. The president of France, Vincent Auriol, was a socialist. AEP was then in the position now occupied by the Agence France-Presse (AFP). My most interesting assignment at AEP was helping to cover the peace conference with the German satellite powers, held at the Luxembourg Palace in the summer of 1946. Jimmy Byrnes, the U.S. secretary of state, was our chief delegate.

The socialists in France began to run into difficulties that summer, and the ripple effect was felt at AEP. I was told I could stay on, but I would have to shift to reporting in French. It was much more of a chore, because French is not my native language. So I went to the European edition of the New York Herald Tribune, and they hired me.

Q: What job did you have with them?

HANEY: I started out doing cable rewrite. Most of the Paris Herald copy that we received from our correspondents came in a form called "cablese." You leave out all the articles, shorten things and run words together to lower the word count, which was the basis of cost. It was akin to reconstituting mashed potatoes from the dried and powdered Army rations still available on the Paris black market. Somebody had to take the cablese and reconstitute it into proper English.

After cable rewrite, I did reporting. And I did translating. An elegant Frenchman who followed the races would come back from Longchamp and write his racing report in longhand. I would translate that for our sports page. I also translated speeches by de Gaulle. That is not so easy. It's said that French is "the diplomatic language" because it is so precise. My experience has been that it's a diplomatic language because it's so fuzzy. Just try to pin down in English what de Gaulle meant exactly when he used grand language, accompanied by equally grand gestures.

Q: Wasn't it, "Algerians, I understand you," which was a famous saying that everybody interpreted different ways?

HANEY: Yes. After cable rewrite, translating racing news and deciphering de Gaulle, I became a full-time reporter. Four of us and the two-man Paris bureau of the New York edition did the reporting. Some of the stories by the local staff would be picked up by the bureau for use in New York. The local newsman from New York who was the chief reporter for the European edition was David Perlman (in later years science editor at The San Francisco Chronicle). When he went back home to the New York edition, I took his place. If I wanted to make a good impression, I could always tell outsiders that I was "city editor" of the European edition, although there were only four of us doing the reporting. I stayed with the Paris Herald for three years. It was an interesting time.

Q: What was your impression of the Fourth Republic, how it worked?

HANEY: Structured Gallic chaos. Because of the war - so much damage, so much loss, so much dislocation, so much ambivalence about how to be French in a France occupied by a foreign power - the national psychological landscape was not the kind of territory that favors obvious, easy answers. Charges of treating with the enemy during the occupation were being made recklessly. Most industries had been disrupted. The newspaper business didn't know where it was going, because so many of the people running it, from top to bottom, were inexperienced. The winter of 1946-'47 was very bad, very cold. In Paris, the outdoor, street-side urinals ("Vespasiennes," named for the emperor who established them in Rome) froze up and coated parts of the street with ice. The garbage wasn't picked up; it piled up frozen on the streets.

There was a shortage of food. The extreme cold had killed the winter wheat, and that French staple - the baguette - was in extremely short supply or even not available. That's about as close as you can get to a state of emergency in France without calling out the troops. French, British and American representatives met in England to seek a remedy. The Americans were generous. We offered to provide what the British interpreter called "corn," which in British English means any kind of bread grain. The Americans who heard "corn" thought of Iowa. When the American contribution arrived by the shipload, it was maize - "corn" as in "Iowa."

As a result, during most of 1947, the French had to eat bread made from corn, which has no gluten. Without gluten, it will rise from the yeast in the dough, but there's nothing elastic (gluten) to hold the bubbles. The French insisted that if it was bread it had to be a baguette. France's "yellow bread" was baked into baguettes about as long and hard as a gendarme's billy club and not much thicker. It caused great furor (and much indigestion) that year. To write a feature about it for the Paris Herald, I visited a laboratory of the National Center for Scientific Research that was testing the "yellow bread" on rats. Some rats were getting regular bread made from wheat. A second cage was served wheat baguettes with a little bit of corn. The third cage got only "yellow bread" - no wheat. According to the scientist in charge of the experiments, a rat in the third cage stuck his nose out between the top and side of the cage, let go with his feet, and was hanged. The scientist said it was an accident.

Yellow bread aside, American assistance was enormously valuable to the French during that period. Regional headquarters for aid to Europe was located in our embassy in Paris.

Q: Did you have any dealings with the embassy while you were in Paris?

HANEY: Yes. The embassy was, of course, the source of the official American view on stories relating to the United States. I went there more regularly also because, with my discharge papers, I could still use the commissary and the PX. Food and American cigarettes were hard to come by, and I was living on the French economy.

And often, when I was down near the Place de la Concorde, I would stop by the embassy to brush up my Russian. One of the elevator operators was a Russian who had fled the revolution and immigrated to France. I'd ride in the elevator with him, we would stop between floors and chat in Russian until people began buzzing insistently for the elevator.

Some years later I was assigned to the embassy as a Foreign Service Reserve Officer, my first post.

Q: Did you run into Art Buchwald?

HANEY: You might say that Art ran into me. As the "city editor" of the Paris Herald, it was my job on behalf of the editor, Geoff Parsons, Jr., to say "No" to the hopeful young Americans who sought to emulate Hemingway and Elliot Paul, who went to Paris after the First World War and ended up as famous writers. Art Buchwald had served in the Marines in the Pacific. He was a Brooklyn lad. After his discharge, he got on a ship and sailed for France. In Paris, he came straight to the Herald Tribune. That was almost always the first place where a newly arrived wannabe would show up. I was the first American connected with the paper that Art met, because I was the designated naysayer.

I used to get two or three young job-seekers a month, and I tried not to discourage them, even though we might not have any opening at the time. After listening to their pitch, I would tell them, "Look, I don't know anybody who has come here and spent several months methodically checking all the possibilities - AP, UP, INS, the Chicago Tribune bureau, the New York Times bureau, and so on - who has not found some kind of an entry job."

So I told Art, "I think that if you stick with it and make the rounds, something will turn up. That's what happened to me. But there's nothing at the Trib right now."

But Art kept coming back. I would say, "I'm sorry, nothing new today, Art. Have you tried some of the other places?" No, he hadn't. He carried a letter from Variety magazine, which he showed me. The gist of it was, "If this young man ever writes anything that is of interest to us, we might print it." Not the sort of thing you could take to the bank. It was clear to me that he didn't have any meaningful backing from Variety, because I knew the Frenchman who was the magazine's stringer in Paris.

Art was so persistent that I thought, "This guy deserves to get the 'No' from Geoff Parsons himself." I went to Geoff and said, "Another young man has been coming around looking for a job. I don't think he knows how to write. But he is so persistent and so nice, I really think that you should tell him 'No' yourself." Geoff didn't like that. But I insisted, so Geoff made the appointment to see Art.

The day after Art's interview with Geoff, I turned up in the city room at 2:00 p.m., the usual check-in time for editorial staff on a morning newspaper. To my surprise, there was Art Buchwald busily occupied at the long table by the switchboard at one end of the city room. He was bent over the table with a ruler and "chopping copy" - tearing off the separate "takes" of wire service copy and sorting them by story. Puzzled, I asked, "What are you doing here, Art?" He replied, "Well, I had a nice talk with Geoff Parsons yesterday, and he told me I could start today."

Geoff was congenitally incapable of saying "No." Getting him to make up his mind was like trying to nail Jell-O to a wall. He had hired Art and started him off chopping copy. Geoff was interested in getting a regular column started, but he didn't have the time himself. In my view, he was too busy on the social circuit. Art thus became our only English-speaking copy boy (the rest of the staff at that level were all French). In addition to those duties, Geoff then asked Art to try writing a column on Parisian restaurants. That meant free meals, which I think he needed. Art would write a piece about the restaurant that had just fed him, the copy desk would clean it up, and the copy would go down the tube to the composing room for the next day's edition.

Little by little, Art's writing got better, more interesting, proving all of us except Geoff Parsons wrong. I think to this day Art has no analytical notion of what he's doing. He just instinctively knows what will go. When I went back to Paris in 1951 to begin my job at the embassy, Art was still at the Paris Herald. By then, he was a well-established columnist, and his pieces were appearing in the New York edition as well as in Paris.

Q: And he's still going.

HANEY: Yes.

Q: Was there the equivalent of a USIS or an OWI in Paris?

HANEY: When I got to the Paris embassy in 1951, the information and cultural function was carried out by the United States Information Service (USIS). The Office of War Information (OWI) had been phased out. The United States Information Agency (USIA, no longer extant, alas!) was not created until 1953, after John Foster Dulles became Secretary of State. I think Dulles wanted to unload USIA because the most visible part of it in the United States was the Voice of America (VOA). That was the McCarthy era, and VOA, seeking foreign language skills, had hired many employees who were emigrants from Europe. The VOA was a soft target.

Q: But while you were working for The Herald Tribune, how did the American embassy handle its press relations?

HANEY: Through the press attachï¿½.

Q: He was a Foreign Service officer?

HANEY: Initially, yes. Then it was a New England newspaperman who, I think, got the job because his congressman pulled strings in Washington. He was a Foreign Service Reserve Officer (as I was at the beginning). Within a year or two, Ben Bradlee arrived to occupy the position of assistant press attachï¿½, eventually press attachï¿½.

Q: We're moving up toward the time when you were making an application to get into the State Department, aren't we?

HANEY: Not quite. In 1949, I had been with the Paris Herald for three years and in Europe for five, counting my time in the Army and with the French wire service. At that point I was feeling restless at The Herald Tribune. I had been sent on assignments to Belgium once and to Switzerland twice to do the interviews and collect the material to support advertising supplements relating to those two countries. Coordinating my coverage with the advertising department, I wrote every story in an eight-page supplement, followed the copy down to the composing room, adjusted the makeup as needed for space, watched the typesetters lock the page into the form, and finally checked the proofs on the stone. From the flat form holding the type the impression was made on a flexible material the French called "flan" ("custard"), which was then rolled into a cylinder for the rotary presses. The flan was also sent to New York, where The Herald Tribune would use the same copy already set in type for a New York supplement on Belgium or Switzerland.

For all my extra work on a supplement, I would get a byline on the front-page lead. I told Geoff Parsons and Eric Hawkins, the managing editor, that I thought I should get some additional compensation for my editorial work on advertising supplements. My appeal fell on deaf ears. I got tired of what had become an annual supplement drill and thought, "Maybe I'll go back home and finish my college degree before I get too old."

So I left the Paris Herald in the summer of 1949 with an option to return if I wished. I traveled to New York from Le Havre on the old Queen Elizabeth with Maggie Higgins, a foreign correspondent for the New York edition. She was heading from her post in Berlin to Asia to cover the Korean War.

Q: You had the GI Bill, didn't you?

HANEY: Yes. I got back to Iowa City in time for the summer session at the university. I made the rounds of various departments to see where I could get the best (and quickest) deal. It turned out that the French department was most interested in me because the number of students majoring in French was dwindling. As it happened, my French was better than that of the professor who was acting head of the department for the summer. He offered me a bonus of free semester hours of credit on the strength of my ability to speak French. Checking on the prerequisites that I would have to complete, we found that in one summer I could satisfy the requirements for a degree. So I registered, took the necessary courses and got my BA at Iowa - in French.

In the meantime, I had applied under the GI Bill for graduate school at UC Berkeley. At the end of '49 I went there for two semesters of graduate work in the Slavic studies program, one of the best in the country at that time. My brother had accompanied me to Berkeley, and I was hoping that he might go to college there, too. The GI Bill wasn't enough to support us both, so I got a job with the journalism department at Berkeley as an instructor. For one school year I taught three classes a week in newswriting for upperclassmen. I never would have lasted at the pace I set for myself. In addition to classroom hours, I met with my students two at a time once a week for what amounted to tutorial sessions.

When the school year ended, the department head wanted me to stay on, teach and work for the advanced degrees that are among the qualifications for tenure. The head of the department called me in and said, "Give me 10 days, and I'll get back to you." Ten days later, he summoned me again and said, "It's all set. You're going to do your master's and doctorate in American history, the master's at Stanford, the doctorate here. In the meantime, you'll be working for us. That way you've got a job here when it's all finished. What could be nicer?"

Well, that didn't interest me one bit. American history is a great subject, but I was on the Soviet studies track. And a Ph.D. and eventual tenure were trumped by a siren song that was the product of a year of hands-on work with my journalism students. For those sessions, I had been using The Oakland Tribune, The San Francisco Chronicle, The San Francisco Examiner to probe what makes a good news story. We would take selected stories apart and learn by example. As a result of this approach, I kept seeing the bylines of my newspaper buddies in Europe - from Vienna, Rome, London, Paris. This was getting to me. So I respectfully declined the offer from the head of the department and left Berkeley after one year to come to Washington.

I was looking for a job that would get me back overseas. Somebody said that the State Department was hiring people who had newspaper experience. I went to the Department's personnel office, where I was received by Gladys Delong. At that time, personnel was on the seventh floor, as I recall. It's a fancier place now, I believe. So I saw Gladys. She asked, "What can I do for you?"

I said, "I'm looking for a job." She said, "You mean a position, don't you?" Having learned my first lesson in the niceties of Foreign Service lingo, I replied, "Yes." I filled out the paperwork and went through the mill. My security clearance took a long time because I had spent five years in Europe. Eventually it came through. For my first assignment I was sent to Paris as a press officer. I think my initial salary was something like $7,000 a year.

Q: This is a good place to stop. We'll pick this up in 1951 when you're back in Paris.

* * *

You went back to Paris again. You were there from '51 to when?

HANEY: Late '55.

Q: When you came into the Foreign Service in '51, was there any training? Or did they just figure you knew what to do?

HANEY: The Foreign Service Institute had a course that ran for a few weeks. We had general exposure to what faces someone abroad serving the U.S. in the Foreign Service. There was also language training. They didn't give me any because I knew French already.

Q: When you arrived in Paris in 1951, who was our ambassador?

HANEY: David K. E. Bruce.

Q: Did you have much to do with the main part of the embassy, or were you off in a separate area?

HANEY: We were in a very distinguished area. If you walk down the Rue du Faubourg St.-Honorï¿½, which goes past one side of the embassy, you come to what is now the ambassador's residence, at number 41. That's where the U.S. Information Service (USIS) was located at the time. The vast garden behind number 41 extends to the Champs-ï¿½lysï¿½es.

Q: What was the French government like? This was the Fourth Republic. How were relations with the United States?

HANEY: Relations were good, although I think that Mr. Dulles, who was then our Secretary of State, overestimated the eagerness of the French to get together with the other European powers that had been allies to form the European Defense Community, a precursor to NATO. Georges Bidault, who had been premier and was president briefly and then premier again, had given the impression to Mr. Dulles and his aides that the Assemblï¿½e Nationale was going to agree to join its European allies in approving the new European body - no problem. It dragged on and on in the Assemblï¿½e Nationale for about four years. It was finally accepted, but the French weren't very happy about it. And their eventual connection with NATO was a tenuous one.

Q: What part of the action did you have in the Press Office?

HANEY: We really had two functions with respect to the press. One was the press attache's office in the embassy on the mezzanine floor. That was the office that managed the spokesman role, answered queries to the embassy, and accompanied the ambassador at press conferences. Then USIS had a press section. It was aimed at a French audience. It received material that was prepared in Washington and sent out by wireless file overnight. That file was translated and packaged as a press report, which was circulated to newspapers or to anybody interested in the U.S. view of things. The press office at USIS was also called on to do things like speechwriting. The USIS audience was exclusively French. The press attachï¿½ was at the elbow of the ambassador and other embassy officers who would occasionally have contact with the press. Ben Bradlee became the assistant press attachï¿½, then press attachï¿½ while I was stationed at the embassy.

Q: He later won fame with The Washington Post as its editor.

HANEY: And in the Watergate movie, too.

Q: How receptive did you find the French press to what we were putting out?

HANEY: I would say that they were about as receptive as our press is to press releases from embassies here in Washington. In Paris, if it was big news, the announcement would come from Washington, or the ambassador would announce it through the press attachï¿½'s office. The USIS wireless file would, of course, carry the gist of big news, but scoops were not our preoccupation. The USIS supporting role was to carry on one part of a dialogue with the French public.

Q: Did we have any contact with the communist press?

HANEY: We read it carefully, but we didn't have any association with it. We certainly did not try to use it as an outlet.

Q: I imagine you had your old colleagues who were still in place. What about the socialist press? How receptive were they? Were they beginning to distance themselves from the U.S. more and more?

HANEY: I don't recall that that was the case. Of course, I had a rather unusual position, because I had worked in the French press earlier. As a reporter for the Agence Europï¿½enne de Presse, I had covered the peace conference with the former German satellite powers. We had an AEP team at the Luxembourg Palace. Molotov headed the Soviet delegation at that conference. Our Secretary of State, Jimmy Byrnes, was head of the U.S. delegation. At his elbow was Chip Bohlen.

I knew the French press well. My boss at AEP was a Russian Jew who had emigrated to France and had been editor of Le Populaire, organ of the French Socialist Party. He was in charge of AEP operations at the Luxembourg Palace. As I have recounted earlier, many press people in the immediate postwar period had little knowledge of the profession. But there was one AEP old-timer who was an accomplished newspaper man. He was trying to get me to join the CGT, the Confï¿½dï¿½ration Gï¿½nï¿½rale du Travail, the big French trade union.

Q: Was this communist?

HANEY: No, not at that time. But communists had infiltrated it to the point that many Americans thought of it as a commie outfit. I am grateful that I did not follow up on my French colleague's suggestion. I joined the newspaper Guild later when I went to The Herald Tribune. I ordinarily support labor unions, and I had no reason not to be in favor of the CGT. But if I had been obliged to put that down on my record when I applied to become a Foreign Service officer, I probably wouldn't be sitting here now.

Q: Did you run across McCarthyism, either you or people around you? This was the height of McCarthyism.

HANEY: Cohn and Schein came to visit when I was stationed in Paris.

Q: Infamous.

HANEY: I was present at one of the sessions down the street at the Rue du Faubourg St.-Honorï¿½. The cultural attachï¿½, a distinguished American professor, was to be interrogated by that pair working for Senator McCarthy. Cohn took over the cultural attachï¿½'s desk. Schein sat next to him. While Cohn fired questions, Schein was going through the professor's desk, opening the drawers and looking to see what was in them. It was a most disgraceful performance. So I could say that we were painfully aware of McCarthyism. Some of our colleagues in USIA were fingered by Cohn and lost their jobs on the basis of alleged guilt by association.

Q: Were there people who were saying, "Maybe you'd better not say this or do that or have contact with so and so," because of McCarthyism? Did you feel it was an inhibiting time?

HANEY: I really didn't feel inhibited. We would not ask ourselves, "What would McCarthy say about this?" We would just do what we thought was the best thing given our mission.

Q: What about the Indochinese war? This was the time of Dien Bien Phu. How was that playing from your perspective?

HANEY: As you know, the American government did consider giving the French aid - not just financial aid, but supplies and perhaps more, I don't know. That possibility was rejected. But living in Paris, you could not help following rather closely what was happening at Dien Bien Phu. Later, I knew a French liaison officer who worked with one of the embassy missions. He had been with French forces at Dien Bien Phu, and I had several interesting talks with him about his experience. We followed it closely. But I was not aware that there was ever a real possibility that the United States might intervene.

Q: Dien Bien Phu fell in early 1954. I was an enlisted man in the Air Force getting ready to get out of the military. All of a sudden, the rumor went around that we might all be kept in, which was not pleasing to us at all.

HANEY: You probably knew more about the possibility than we did.

Q: I was just in the barracks. But it was of concern. Did Algeria play much of a role in your contacts with the French?

HANEY: At that point, Algeria was still considered by the French to be part of the Mï¿½tropole, like a province, a part of European France. Of course, as time went on and the colonies became more restive, voices were heard in France advocating independence, and strong voices opposed it.

In 1952, the U.N. General Assembly met in Paris, in one of the wings of the Palais de Chaillot. Dean Acheson was Secretary of State at the time. I was detached from the embassy to join the U.S. delegation for the duration of the GA meeting because they needed a French speaker familiar with the French press. I worked for Porter McKeever, head of the U.S. delegation's public information section.

I remember that when the subject came up of independence for the French colonies in North Africa - Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria - the U.N. decided that "We won't discuss that in Paris because that would be offensive to our hosts." But in his opening speech to the political committee, Acheson made a reference to the desires of the French colonies, in Africa particularly, for independence. I can remember what he said, because I was sitting in the U.S. delegation offices working with the staffer who transcribed speeches. He would pass his transcription to me, and I would clean it up as necessary. Acheson had said, "If you're standing on a railroad track and you see an express train coming toward you, get off the track." He was talking about the drive for independence among the colonies. I thought that was an apt description of what was happening. The next day, the wireless file that was compiled in Washington daily by USIA and sent out worldwide gave a lot of space to Acheson's speech. The "express train" reference had been removed, however, apparently because somebody felt it would be offensive to the French.

Subsequently, when the General Assembly returned to the United States for a rump session in New York, the ministers for foreign affairs of the French colonies in North Africa applied for visas at our embassy in Paris. They held French diplomatic passports, and they wished to be present when the GA discussed the colonial question, which had been kept off the agenda in Paris. Our embassy denied them visas. I never did find out why.

Q: There was something that became known in the State Department as the "Battle of North Africa" or the "Battle of Africa," between the European bureaus - i.e., France and all-and officers who were dealing with the Near East and Africa. The European side was thinking in terms of "We don't want to get the French riled up because we want them to join NATO. So, let's just forget about this." People who dealt with the Near East and Africa were saying, "This express train is coming along. We're going to catch it." This was a battle that was really being waged in Washington.

HANEY: That's what I sensed.

Q: What was your impression of French politics at this time? There were so many changes in government. Did you feel that this was the sign of a very weak state, or did you see this as something that really wasn't as bad as it looked from the outside?

HANEY: It was a matter of concern to most Frenchmen because they certainly didn't have a stable government for some years following the Second World War. Bidault, the prime minister, got caught between pressure from the United States to sign on to the European Defense Community and the feeling on the part of most Frenchmen that they didn't want to give away any part of their sovereignty, that they didn't want their military power, for example, subjected to scrutiny or orders from any other part of Europe. If they got into EDC and NATO, they feared that a French military unit might fall under the command of, who knows? a German unit.

Q: With your connections with France, how did you find the social life and the professional melded together? How receptive did you find the French?

HANEY: I had no problem whatsoever. My own view was that very often we in USIA who had immediate contact with the French press on a working basis and more contact with ordinary people, not just other diplomats, sometimes had a better sense of what was in the works than an embassy political officer who might pick up much of what he learned at diplomatic cocktail parties.

Q: It gets quite incestuous within the diplomatic community.

HANEY: Yes. We saw that particularly later in India where, because of the language problem among other things, the embassy political section was not really on top of what was happening. My wife, Mary, was doing work with Indian women, which gave her valuable insight into the minds, if not the hearts, of the Indians.

Q: Let's stick to France. What was your wife doing at that time?

HANEY: In Paris she was taking care of our first child.

Q: That kept her hands full.

HANEY: Yes. We had met in Paris when she was a staff member of the U.S. delegation to the General Assembly, which met there in 1952.

Q: Did you find that there was much difference between what was happening in Paris and elsewhere in France? Was the real political life concentrated in Paris?

HANEY: Political life on an international scale was of course concentrated in Paris. But French internal politics had plenty to do with the provinces. The agricultural sector, for example, was very important to any French politician. But with respect to the international scene, Paris had its view much as Washington inside the Beltway has its view of what's going on, not just in the country but in the world.

Q: What about radio and television? Was television much of a factor in those days?

HANEY: Television was just beginning. I became the radio and television officer when the radio officer who had been clinging to the job for six years was finally told he was being transferred to Africa. I think he quit. After a stint as a press officer, then temporary duty with our U.N. delegation at the Palais de Chaillot in 1952, and finally a year as an assistant in the office of the Public Affairs Officer (PAO), I was shifted to the radio officer slot. Television was added to my responsibilities when French TV finally took off.

Q: Was the activity different with radio and television? Was it an important factor in molding French opinion? How did we get to it?

HANEY: Yes, I think radio - and then TV - was important because in many parts of France, radio was how you got your news. The Voice of America (VOA) had a half hour every night on the French Chaine Nationale network, a slot that had been used by the OWI until the VOA came along. I inherited that half hour. The first 15 minutes I filled with American music - performers that were American, American works, American opera. I even tossed in some Kurt Weil, for example his "Down in the Valley," from the folksong expanded into a musical. I spent every Wednesday afternoon in a small Radiodiffusion Franï¿½aise (RDF) studio in the rue Vernet, near the ï¿½toile, recording in French on large platters a week's worth of comments on the music. Day by day at the appointed hour throughout the following week, the French technicians in the studio alternated my comments with the works I had chosen on commercial records, and the whole recorded segment was broadcast on the Chaine Nationale. In short, I was a disk jockey (except that I never had to lift or plant a tone arm).

The second segment of my half hour was 15 minutes of news and commentary broadcast shortwave from VOA and picked up by RDF for relay by medium wave in France. The signal was crackly and sometimes weak - it reminded me of listening to the BBC in Europe on shortwave during the war. I would introduce the Stateside segment with, "Ici, New York!" Because that galvanizing introduction had been recorded the week before, I could head home from my downtown office every evening and listen to myself and my New York colleagues on the Chaine Nationale before dinner.

Probably more significant in terms of reaching a French audience with a radio program serving our policy objectives was the work I did with Radio Luxembourg, a commercial station with its main studios in Paris. The French radio was nationalized, an instrument of whatever government was in power. Radio Luxembourg had no such ties, was independent, and could broadcast what it thought would appeal most to listeners. Polls showed consistently that Radio Luxembourg's listenership in France was greater and its programs more favorably regarded than any of the RDF channels. Luxembourg broadcast by long wave and could be heard on ordinary radios throughout France. Its evening news came on in prime time, 6:00 or 7:00 p.m., as I recall.

Radio Luxembourg didn't have the staff to cover much of Europe. I employed a stringer who had earlier worked as an RDF correspondent. So I suggested to Radio Luxembourg that I furnish them coverage, using my stringer, of events in Vienna, London, Rome. My man could send his report and any useful sound effects (for example, crowd noises) by wire to the large and well-equipped Marshall Plan studio on the Boulevard Haussman, not far from l'ï¿½toile. As a courtesy to the embassy (and the VOA), I was allowed to use a modern (1954) recording studio and the services of a top-notch engineer. He recorded on tape (I said we were up-to-date) at 30 inches per second. That speed allowed him to remove a hiccup or a syllable, no one the wiser.

Luxembourg accepted my offer. I would propose stories to be covered, and, with their agreement, I would send my stringer to report the story, furnish the sound elements, and we would put it in Luxembourg's hands as a tape ready to go in time for their evening newscast. Although Radio Luxembourg didn't say so, the listener was left to believe that my stringer was one of Luxembourg's correspondents.

American radio was so wedded to authenticity that if you covered a fatal leap from the Empire State Building, you would have to have someone on the sidewalk with a mike to catch the sickening sound of the impact. Not so in France. With imagination, the requisite recorded sound elements, a brief narrative and a good engineer you could put together a coherent story that would nicely fill a two-minute spot.

This is the way it worked for coverage of the signing of the Austrian State Treaty in Vienna: My stringer was dispatched to Vienna with detailed instructions. On the day of the signing he recorded the sound of bands and crowd noises and the beginning of the principal speech in German. A separate recorded chunk provided his translation in French of salient elements of the speech. When we had received all these recorded bits in the studio, I worked with the engineer to meld the separate parts into a coherent and smoothly flowing two-minute spot. My engineer then copied the finished product on a fresh tape as a seamless package. And at 6:00 p.m., a "cycliste" from Radio Luxembourg came to the studio to pick up the edited tape. Then I went home to listen to it on Radio Luxembourg evening news, which identified my stringer by name but not by affiliation.

Q: They wouldn't identify you as . . .

HANEY: Oh, no. The tape I provided was broadcast as part of a Radio Luxembourg newscast. I once figured out that I was spending about $3,000 a year in transportation and expenses for my stringer, plus his hourly compensation for time spent on assignment. And we were getting about $65,000 worth of airtime. Our spots were carried in prime time, and Luxembourg was a commercial station.

Q: Of course, at that time, Radio Luxembourg was the authoritative and most popular station around.

HANEY: Right. Independent polls showed that Radio Luxembourg was way ahead of any French station.

Q: How did the Soviet Union play? Did you get involved in showing the depths of depravity in the Soviet Union, the "Evil Empire" and all that, or was that not part of your business?

HANEY: We usually didn't get into that. It would have taken up manpower and time that could be used more effectively for positive and more interesting subjects for a French audience. The whole business of the Cold War - who's the good guy, and who's the bad guy - was a theme with variations played ad nauseam by the French Communist Party.

When the U.N. General Assembly met in Paris in 1952, Eleanor Roosevelt was a member of the U.S. delegation. Warren Austin was the head of the delegation. When Austin had to return to the States early, Eleanor Roosevelt replaced him. During the GA meeting, she was doing a weekly program on the French radio in French. The temporary RDF studio installed in the Palais de Chaillot was a cubicle half a story up in one of the high-ceilinged halls. You had to climb up to it on rickety wooden stairs. I remember ushering Mrs. Roosevelt up there every week for her ten-minute program.

Throughout the GA meeting we were besieged by French communist delegations coming from as far away as Marseilles to protest the alleged American use of germ warfare in Korea. These groups would arrive on the steps of the Palais de Chaillot seeking an audience. One of my jobs was to receive these guys, try to identify the leader, and agree to take one or two representatives of the group to see Mrs. Roosevelt. I don't believe she changed any minds, but she might have opened some.

Q: I might add that this germ warfare accusation was as far as anyone knows pure propaganda put out by the communist side.

HANEY: Yes.

Q: You left there before de Gaulle came in?

HANEY: De Gaulle was president from '44 to '46 under the provisional government. I began work at the Paris Herald while he was still in the ï¿½lysï¿½e Palace. Then he was president again in '59 and '69. I was transferred from the Paris embassy back to Washington for a home assignment toward the end of '55. But de Gaulle remained very much a part of the French political scene even out of office.

Q: Did you have any contact with de Gaulle at that time? Did he sort of appear and make pronouncements and then go back home?

HANEY: Yes, you would see him on French TV, in newsreels and in the press. He appealed to a part of the French psyche that had not quite lost its grip on the glory that was France in Napoleonic times. It would be interesting to check the texts of his public speeches to see just how often he would invoke "la gloire franï¿½aise." When he spoke those words, you'd swear you could hear trumpets in the background.

De Gaulle's speeches did strike a cord in the French people. France was in pretty bad shape at the end of the war. I had lived there as a civilian on the French economy until 1949, so I knew first-hand what a struggle it was. In 1952, France was fighting to maintain its colonial power in Vietnam. Its African colonies were restive. "La gloire franï¿½aise" rang a bit hollow, even when intoned by de Gaulle.

During the '52 GA meetings, the offices of the U.S. delegation were in the Astoria Hotel, on the Champs-ï¿½lysï¿½es not far from the ï¿½toile. Our windows looked out on that grand boulevard. While we occupied those offices, General de Lattre de Tassigny died. He had commanded the French 1st Army in World War II and was subsequently named high commissioner and military commander in French Indochina. In Paris, "la gloire franï¿½aise" shone once more, briefly, to mark his passing. De Lattre was posthumously given the rank of "Marï¿½chal." And from an upper floor of the Astoria we watched the elaborate funeral cortege make its stately way from the ï¿½toile down the Champs-ï¿½lysï¿½es to the Place de la Concorde. For one day, the pomp matched the circumstance. "La gloire franï¿½aise" had made a brief apparition, then faded quickly into memory again.

: During the time you were there both as a plain citizen and as a member of the diplomatic corps, what were you noticing about the division within France of those who collaborated and those who didn't? Was there almost a tacit "Let's not talk about that?"

HANEY: In the immediate wake of the war, as cities and towns were liberated, rough street justice was sometimes meted out to known collaborators. This punishment was more psychological than physical - nobody that I know of was taken out and shot. Frenchmen believed to have been cozy with "les Boches" were subjected to insult and innuendo rather than injury. Prostitutes who had associated with the occupiers were rounded up, their heads shaved bald, and herded down the street.

There was not a clear-cut line between Frenchmen who collaborated for personal benefit and those who simply tried to get along with the Germans because times were tough. I think you're right about the inclination "not to talk about that." There has never been a clear definition in the public mind of "collaboration."

I've mentioned the chaotic state of the French press in the immediate wake of the war. When all the professionals who - rightly or wrongly - had been accused of "collaboration" were flushed out, the technical, political and intellectual task of publishing a daily paper often fell to neophytes. The press perhaps suffered more postwar upheaval than other sectors because it had left a "paper trail." Many French men and women saw the disarray of the press as a great opportunity and promptly joined the fray. As I have pointed out, in Paris this led to a large turnover in the press corps and the publication of something like 40 dailies in the first years after the war.

I sense that now, a half-century and several generations later, the French are more disposed to look more searchingly, more realistically at how they reacted to the occupation. The film, "Le Chagrin et la Pitiï¿½" ("The Sorrow and the Pity") is an example of the more clear-eyed view that the current generation is beginning to cast on the trying years of German occupation.

Q: When you were moving with your contacts, did people say, "Oh, yes, So and So, he or she was very much dealing with the Nazis?"

HANEY: I never saw or heard of anybody fingered as a collaborator except prostitutes who were marched down the street.

Q: You left the Paris embassy in 1955. Where to?

HANEY: I returned to Washington on a home assignment. I became chief of the Soviet and Satellites Branch of USIA Intelligence and Research.

Q: You did that from '55 to when?

HANEY: Until '58.

Q: What did that comprise? What were you doing?

HANEY: My unit consisted of experienced officers - some Foreign Service on home assignment, like me; some Civil Service - who analyzed developments in the USSR and Eastern Europe of interest to the Voice of America, to USIA policy officers, and to the area director and his desk officers.

When I arrived in Washington on consultation before home leave, I was briefed on my new job by my future boss, Henry Loomis. He asked me, "When do you want to start?" I said, "Sometime in February." He said, "Why don't you check in on Valentine's Day. That sounds auspicious." My first day on the new job coincided very closely with Nikita Khrushchev's speech to the 20th Party Congress. That was the day in 1956 when he "outed" Stalin, so to speak. The Soviet and Satellites Branch was frantically busy for several weeks reporting on and analyzing the speech.

Q: You might explain what the speech was about.

HANEY: Essentially it was an acknowledgment of some of the bad things that had happened under the Stalin regime. Stalin died when I was on a train to Paris from near Mt. Blanc, where I had been skiing, in March of 1953. The Khrushchev speech to the Party Congress was in '56. Finally, Khrushchev was sufficiently confident to confirm some of the worst abuses under Stalin.

Q: We were using that all over the world to say, "See, we told you so." Until then, if you went to Soviet or Communist Party sources, everything was rosy and wonderful in the communist world, and then we had Khrushchev telling the Congress and eventually making it known in wider circles that Stalin was not the benevolent "Uncle Joe."

HANEY: Right.

Q: Did you get involved during this time in the Suez Crisis and the Hungarian revolution in the fall of '56? The Hungarian revolution must have gotten you involved.

HANEY: Yes. We had an excellent analyst who spoke fluent Hungarian. He was an American, so his English was fluent, too. He later joined the Foreign Service and eventually became an ambassador in East Africa: Jock Shirley.

Q: How was the Hungarian revolt seen as it developed? It must have been a difficult time for you.

HANEY: This may be just my own view, but I was disappointed because Secretary of State Dulles had been encouraging countries under Soviet domination to rise up, leading them - and me - to think that we would try to be helpful if they did. But nothing happened.

Q: Were we watching pretty carefully, particulary after that, that we weren't inspiring people to revolt then not backing it up? Were we beginning to feel restraints on how we could handle these things?

HANEY: There was plenty to say and do without going so far as inciting revolt. That question never arose so far as I know.

Q: When you were back in Washington, how did you find that USIA worked with the State Department? Were they two pretty separate entities?

HANEY: Cooperation was good. The final word on policy was, of course, the State Department's. USIA had an Office of Policy that was in close touch with the Department. In almost all cases that I know of, somebody who was USIA's Hungarian desk officer, for example, would be in close contact with the Hungarian desk officer at State. As chief of the Soviet and Satellite Branch in USIA's Office of Intelligence and Research, I frequently attended meetings relevant to that area at the State Department, occasionally at the level of Assistant Secretary, more often at the desk level. In my judgment, liaison with and policy direction from State were sufficient and appropriate.

Q: How did you find the intelligence you were getting? Did you get anything from the CIA directly?

HANEY: No, I didn't see CIA assessments relevant to my area. But we received the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), which was operated under the aegis of CIA. That provided us with monitoring reports of radio broadcasts in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Q: How about the Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the State Department?

HANEY: Oh, yes, we got their product.

Q: Was your branch of USIA rather heavily staffed with people who were ï¿½migrï¿½s from the satellites and Russia?

HANEY: We had an analyst from Poland and one from Russia. Our Hungarian analyst, as I have mentioned, was Jock Shirley, who had lived in Hungary as a boy with his father, an American businessman.

Q: How was your product used?

HANEY: Our reports went to all of the USIA area directors, to the appropriate desks at the Voice of America and to our counterparts in State. We responded to queries, from the USIA director to desk officers, concerning the Soviet Union and its satellites.

Q: In '58, whither?

HANEY: It would have been in '57 when the public affairs officer at our embassy in Belgrade managed to get the Agency to agree that he needed a deputy public affairs officer. I had served in Paris when he was deputy public affairs officer there, and he asked for me by name. USIA concurred, and I was moved out of Research and Intelligence and put in a holding pattern, waiting for the Yugoslavs to agree to the new position.

We had just bought a new house out in Kensington, the first we had ever owned. By then, we had two children. To help prepare me for my new assignment, the Agency sent me for tutoring twice a week in Serbo-Croatian at the Sanz School. I guess USIA thought that since I knew Russian, I could pick up Serbo-Croatian on the fly. At home before dinner, while Mary was feeding our older child, Christopher, in his high chair in the kitchen, I would sit in the living room and practice reading Serbo-Croatian out loud. The first time Christopher heard me, he asked, "Mummy, what's that noise?"

Time flew, we rented the new house and began to prepare to ship out to Belgrade. But when the Agency applied for our visas, they were denied. It appeared that the Yugoslavs had nothing against me personally. We surmised that they were concerned that if they allowed a new position at the American embassy, the Soviets would seek to add a position on their staff in Yugoslavia.

Q: Why would there be a connection with the Soviets?

HANEY: Well, the Soviets and the Yugoslavs were not on good terms. It was not Tito, as some people believe, who said, "The hell with your Cominform. I'm pulling out." He was kicked out. Tito had led his country in expelling the Germans in World War II without the help of the Soviets. Of all the communist countries in Europe at the end of the war, Yugoslavia was the only one that had freed itself. Yugoslav-Soviet relations had been uneasy for some years. The Soviets kept pushing the Yugoslavs for more slots. They had already opened up branch information centers in Skopje and in Ljubljana. The Yugoslavs, we guessed, didn't want to give the Soviets any grounds for stationing more people in Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav denial of the visas obliged Mary and me to reverse course and forget about Yugoslavia and the American Security Storage Company. We had to tell the people who were expecting to move into our house that we would have to invoke the escape clause - we weren't going anywhere. I went back to work, floating around in the European Division. Suddenly, the Yugoslavs sent word that they were ready to give us visas. I never did find out what changed their minds. So then we went to Belgrade in the summer of 1958.

Q: You were in Belgrade from 1958 until when?

HANEY: Until 1962. The first year, I had learned enough Serbian - we were in the Serbian-speaking part of the country - that I was able to get around comfortably, and I began to get the feel of the country. When my two-year assignment was about up, I asked to be extended for one more year. So Washington said, "Fine, you can stay for the third year." (I think the reason was not that they were doing me a favor, but that they didn't have a replacement ready.) So we stayed on. Then Mary got a speaking engagement in Sri Lanka. The PAO in Colombo and his wife were old friends of ours, so we took a short break down there in lieu of home leave.

As our third year in Yugoslavia came to a close, George Kennan was named ambassador. The chance to serve with someone so distinguished was compelling, so I asked to be extended another year. They granted me the extension. That's how we happened to be there for four years.

Q: So you were there from '58-'62.

HANEY: Yes.

Q: When you arrived, what was the state of relations between the United States and Yugoslavia?

HANEY: It was pretty good. We had a number of programs going, including a "counterpart funds" program. We sold the Yugoslavs agricultural products that they needed and took payment in dinars, which were not convertible, and we used the dinars subsequently for people who were working on behalf of the United States in Yugoslavia. The same was true in Poland. The Yugoslavs were experimenting with something that the Poles had tried out that didn't work - "workers' self-management." The Yugoslavs did a somewhat better job of it, but their economy was a nightmare because the dinar had values ranging from 24:1, which is what we got, to 1,000:1. If you were buying rubber from Germany for tires for the bicycles that you manufactured in Yugoslavia, you would pay 1,000:1. Other hard currency expenses for raw materials or manufactured parts might run the gamut of the exchange rate scale. How you calculated the actual cost of the bicycle and what price you should ask for it, I have no idea. In the end, it wasn't a very good process. But they were moving toward somewhat greater freedom in the economy and the ability of people with small enterprises to do their own thing.

The State Department was in charge of major American cultural events that visited Yugoslavia and other countries under the sponsorship of the embassy and were managed locally by USIS. Helen Hayes and a small company came and performed several American plays. The basso, Boris Kristoff, appeared in the Belgrade opera company's production of "Boris Godunov." Kristoff sang in Russian, the Yugoslavs in Serbian. Stravinsky visited and conducted the local symphony orchestra. Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic performed in Zagreb. We were also sending people to the United States on exchange grants.

We had a fairly good working relationship with the Yugoslavs. When you went over to the Foreign Secretariat (the Yugoslav equivalent of a foreign ministry), if the American desk officer was in agreement with what you had to say - a proposal, a request or a notification - he would send for coffee and sljivovica. But if you brought a complaint of some kind, he had a drawer in his desk that he would open, pull out a neatly typed counter-complaint and lay it on.

One should not forget that it was a communist country. One American officer newly arrived in Belgrade had spent some time with American exhibits programs in the Soviet Union. He had been duly impressed by the restrictions and surveillance that the regime there imposed on foreigners. After a few days in Belgrade, he said, "Gosh, this place is great. Like a breath of fresh air."

On his first Sunday in Belgrade, I was on embassy duty, and I got a call. It was my friend with Soviet experience. "Where are you?" I asked. "In Novi Sad," he said (a city on the Danube halfway between Belgrade and the Hungarian border). "Where in Novi Sad?"

"I'm in the police station," he said.

"What happened?" I asked.

He said, "A friend and I drove up here to take a look at Novi Sad. We came to a bridge across the Danube. The bridge is shared by trains and cars. They had stopped automobile traffic while a train crossed, so we had to wait."

The pair of American sightseers got out of their car and noticed a castle on a hill behind them. My friend took out his camera and snapped a picture of the castle. When the train had passed, they got in line and drove across the bridge as far as the guard's shack on the other side of the river.

The guard motioned for them to halt and approached my friend, the driver, who had rolled the window down. "Give me your camera," said the guard. "No," said my friend, "I'm not going to give you my camera."

"Okay," said the guard, in a somewhat sharper tone. "Then take out the film and give it to me." My friend replied, "No, I'm not going to give you my film. I've got lots of shots on that roll from our trip all the way from Spain to Yugoslavia."

He kept his camera, and the local police kept him. When they arrived at the police station he was allowed to call our embassy in Belgrade, where I took the call.

He asked me, "What do I do?" I said, "If you don't want to stay where you are for an unpredictable length of time, give them the film. Ask for a receipt if you want, but there's no guarantee you'll get it back." That was the last he saw of his film. To somebody familiar with the restrictions rigidly enforced in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia at first glance looked like a walk in the park. But it was still a police state. In the case of my new friend, it was a good lesson learned early.

Q: Who was the head of USIS there?

HANEY: When I arrived at the post the PAO was Heath Bowman, who had been Deputy PAO in Paris during my tour there. Bowman was replaced by Walter Roberts, who persuaded Washington to award him the diplomatic title of counselor for public affairs a few months after his arrival. (The rest of us were all "attachï¿½s.")

Q: You were saying you got very much involved with the Press Law.

HANEY: The Yugoslavs did not feel that they had sufficient control over Soviet information programs. The Soviets had information centers in a couple of Yugoslav cities where we didn't have a presence. They had begun what looked like a slow, creeping expansion. So the Yugoslavs decided that the best way to bring them under control was to write a new law, the Press Law, that would govern the information and cultural activities of any foreign country aiming such programs at a Yugoslav audience. The law would apply, in the case of the United States, to our library, distribution of the daily wireless file, circulation of a monthly magazine in Serbian, and to visiting American lecturers and artists. In the case of the British, the law would cover the British Council. The French had an information center and a major French-teaching program.

The Yugoslav law termed the foreign organization that carried out these activities an informativna slu?ba (information service). Every embassy engaging in activities specified by the law was required to name a person in charge, the odgovorni urednik (responsible editor), who could not hold a diplomatic passport. In other words, he or she could be prosecuted under Yugoslav law for any infraction of a state-to-state agreement to be negotiated separately with every affected embassy. Diplomatic status could not be used as a shield.

When word of the new law first reached foreign embassies in Belgrade, French, British and American diplomatic representatives got together to forge a common front. Then, as bilateral talks with the Yugoslavs began, it became apparent that the Yugoslavs were not about to cut any slack for anybody. In the end, the French came down to where they will always end up: "Just so long as we can continue to teach French, we don't care what else you do." The British bottom line was, "Okay, we'll get somebody non-diplomatic to head the British Council, but the British Council must continue." The American embassy managed to retain the information center and reading room, wireless file, monthly magazine - all our activities, in fact. And, with her agreement, we proposed to designate the wife of the New York Times correspondent in Belgrade as our "responsible editor."

But we had a great deal of difficulty persuading Washington that if we only enlisted an odgovorni urednik as nominal head of our informativna slu?ba it wasn't going to constrain our operation in the slightest. Somehow, anonymous "Washington" thought this would be such a slap in the face of Uncle Sam that we couldn't possibly allow it. There was real wild talk at home about how we should retaliate. Our PAO was so alarmed at the prospect that the whole of USIS was going to have to close that he took off without clearance from the Agency and headed for Washington to try to persuade people there that paying lip service to the Press Law by naming a "responsible editor" wouldn't cost us a thing, and we could continue business as usual. The real target of the Yugoslav Press Law was the Soviet Union.

The deadline approached, and our PAO was in transit somewhere between Belgrade and Washington. USIA and State continued to withhold permission to name a "responsible editor," sign off on the Press Law and get on with business. On the last day before the Yugoslavs would presumably lower the boom in the absence of agreement, I drafted a note that we would put on the door of the information center the next morning. It was short and blunt. I can't remember the exact words, but the gist was, "Our Information Center is closed, and all related activities have ceased." I took the draft up to Ambassador Kennan for his approval. I told him, "I think maybe this will get Washington to move. I propose we send them a NIACT saying, 'Here is the text that we are putting on the front door of the information center tomorrow morning.'" The Ambassador concurred.

Washington responded with a NIACT saying, in effect, "Okay, go ahead and sign." We signed the agreement and continued business as usual.

Q: This was really aimed at the Soviets.

HANEY: Right, and we knew this.

Q: Were we getting assurances from the Yugoslavs on the side?

HANEY: The Yugoslavs had never really nudged us in the ribs or winked. But it was obvious that their major concern was what the Soviets were trying to do. To avoid making their concern appear to be a strictly bilateral matter, the Yugoslavs worked out a way to make it apply to everybody. But the Press Law was written in such a way that it would have no real effect on bona fide information and cultural activities that bore no hint or threat of subversion. The Yugoslavs were concerned about a hostile Soviet influence.

The Press Law negotiations were fascinating. Together with the DCM, I attended all of the bilateral meetings, which were conducted in Serbian. And I did all of the reporting to Washington. The files on our talks grew so thick we divided them into two parts, the "Old Testament" and the "New Testament." To me they represented an interesting and revealing look into the official Yugoslav Weltanschauung. I thought they would prove useful to our successors at the post. Some years later, for old times' sake I stopped off in Belgrade on my way back from inspection duty. I had lunch with the current PAO, and I mentioned our experience during the Press Law negotiations. When I asked about the Old and New Testaments, the PAO told me, "Oh, we threw all of that out."

Q: We had a library on ?ika Ljubina, right in the middle of Belgrade, on the Corso, which meant you couldn't go near the heart of the city without going past the window displays. We also had centers in Zagreb and Ljubljana.

HANEY: We didn't have anything in Sarajevo. Or in Skopje, not in my time. Only in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana.

Q: Did you get involved with the Yugoslav press much?

HANEY: Not very much, no, except that I read it faithfully every day. I knew several people in the press. But they were so party-line that there was little point in cultivating them.

Q: And the press was no more than political-just about as bad as the Soviet press with all that communist verbiage. They did rattle on.

HANEY: Yes. Texts of Tito's speeches in the Belgrade press presented a curious linguistic problem. Tito was a Croat; he spoke Croatian, in which the letter yat' in Old Church Slavonic is represented by ije ("ee-yeh"), and the particular version of "Serbo-Croatian" spoken in Croatia is thus termed ijekavski. In Serbian, yat' becomes simply e (pronounced "eh"), and that version of the language is called ekavski. Tito wrote in Latinitsa, using the Latin alphabet. Serbs (like Russians) write in Cyrillic. When the party organ, Borba, quoted Tito, his remarks were printed in Cyrillic, like the rest of the paper that was published in Serbian Belgrade. But Tito's Croatian pronunciation was faithfully rendered in a Cyrillic version of ijekavski. That was the only time you'd ever see Cyrillic ijekavski, which is something of an oxymoron.

Q: Did you get involved in an exchange program?

HANEY: That was the province of the cultural attachï¿½. Other members of the USIA staff weighed in and helped evaluate the post's nominations.

Q: Belgrade had a rather lively cultural life at that time.

HANEY: Yes.

Q: Did you get involved with this?

HANEY: Belgrade had a very active opera. I recall the embassy's preparations for a visit by C. Douglas Dillon, then Secretary of the Treasury. He had expressed the desire to see something of cultural life in Belgrade. I went to the Foreign Secretariat to see what might be going on during Dillon's visit. Perhaps he could go to the opera. It turned out that the opera scheduled during his stay in Belgrade was not a very distinguished work. So undistinguished, in fact, that I can't recall now what it was. The woman with whom we were dealing in the Yugoslav secretariat told us, "It's such a shame. In the old days, you could just tell the opera to cancel the scheduled program and throw in 'Boris Godunov.' But we can't do that anymore."

Q: Were you there when they had the very first "nonaligned" conference?

HANEY: Yes.

Q: Would you explain what that was?

HANEY: As I've mentioned earlier, the international grouping of which Belgrade was a member in the immediate postwar period was the Soviet-led Cominform. When Tito was kicked out of that body, he cast about for some means of reappearing on the world stage. To maintain his leftist credentials as a champion of the working man (and woman), he couldn't throw in his lot with the capitalist countries. So he naturally gravitated toward those countries emerging as "nonaligned" - linked neither to the communist nor the capitalist world. It would seem, in retrospect, a reasonable and politically advantageous step for Yugoslavia to ally (I shouldn't say, "align") itself with the nonaligned world, with the likes of Indonesia (Sukarno) and the Republic of Mali (Modibo Keita), inter alia.

The first "nonaligned conference" ever convened was held in Belgrade after the Yugoslavs had made themselves honorary members of the nonaligned movement. The Serbian moniker for "nonaligned" was "vanblokovski" ("outside of blocs"). The conference was held in the parliament building in the center of Belgrade. Close by was a party building that was used as a well-appointed press center during the conference. The American press was well represented. But foreign correspondents covering the conference found themselves cut off from contact with the delegates and dependent on handouts. Then a big story came along from outside the conference venue. The Soviets had resumed testing of nuclear weapons, flagrantly breaking an understanding we thought we had that no nuclear power would conduct further tests.

Q: It was a big one, too.

HANEY: Yes. Tito made an innocuous remark about resumption of testing, but he didn't protest. The foreign press, with nothing of substance to report about the conference, jumped on the Soviet move as a shocking development that failed to provoke a comparable Yugoslav response. Some correspondents wrote that the United States should punish the failure of Yugoslavia to react forcefully by kicking out all the Yugoslav pilots training in Texas. And "stop giving them wheat" (the United States was providing Yugoslavia wheat for "counterpart funds" in dinars that were not convertible). That became the big story, bearing out my "pressure cooker theory": Confine a collection of prominent newsmen in a closed space with no access to what's going on, and expect an explosion.

The Soviet nuclear testing story drowned out the nonaligned conference for a while, and it soured our relations with Yugoslavia briefly. If you checked it out, Tito didn't really say anything new or exceptional in this case. But restrictions on the foreign press, which was covering the nonaligned conference from an isolation ward, set the stage for diversion, and the Soviets sparked the blowoff, which concentrated on Yugoslavia.

Q: This had real repercussions. Tito was more or less characterized as saying, "Well, American nuclear testing is bad, but Soviet testing isn't that bad." That's how it came across. It also rubbed off on the whole nonaligned movement, which was accused of being "nonaligned" on the side of the Soviets.

HANEY: Had it not been for the way the Yugoslavs treated the press, if they had given the foreign correspondents more access to the delegates, this would never have happened. But the press got really teed off, so they grabbed the first thing available - Tito's supposed reaction to Soviet resumption of nuclear testing.

Q: It made a splash around the world. How did you feel about your time in Belgrade? Did you feel that this was a different country, that it was communism with a pleasant face and a place you could deal with? Or once you got there, did you find the constrictions were such that it wasn't as open as you thought before you got there?

HANEY: I don't believe that communism can ever be considered to have a pleasant face. But the official Yugoslav ideology really didn't weigh that heavily on people who were living there as we were. We were free to travel. I wandered all over the place.

But my initial reaction to being in Yugoslavia had nothing to do with ideology or constrictions. For the first and only time in my life I experienced what people call "cultural shock." Nothing in Yugoslavia had been rebuilt since the war, and there had been quite a bit of damage. Housing was tight. So my wife and I and two small children lived in the Hotel Majestic, in downtown Belgrade. It had been a fashionable place in the years before the war, but the street that ran past it was still paved with cobblestones. There were no screens on the windows, so we didn't leave the windows open because we were afraid the kids would crawl up on the window sill. Even with the windows closed in the heat of the summer, we were awakened early when the farmers brought their produce in to the local market. The iron-rimmed wagon wheels and the horses hooves on the cobblestones made an ungodly clatter. When they had all passed and we had gone back to sleep, the hose brigade arrived to flush the streets, another noisy procedure.

I found a short-wave/medium-wave Telefunken radio at the office that I took back to the hotel to monitor VOA, the BBC and local stations. Much of the music broadcast locally was thoroughly Eastern - fit for kola dances, or wailing songs accompanied by unidentifiable strings and insistent percussion. For my first few weeks in Belgrade, I felt distinctly uneasy. Not because of the communists, not because of our makeshift accommodations - it was that damned music. Call it "cultural shock." Happily, I got over that and, with the exception of our daughter, who favors Warsaw, every member of the family would agree that the best post we ever had was Belgrade.

Q: By the way, how did you find George Kennan? His is one of the great names in American diplomacy. How did you find working under him? Did you have much contact with him?

HANEY: I saw him daily. The offices of the PAO and deputy PAO were in the embassy, on Kneza Milosa, not at the information center on ?ika Ljubina.

George Kennan is an extremely interesting and knowledgeable human being. Mary and I had personal experience of his warmth, thoughtfulness and encouraging spirit when we served on his staff in Belgrade in our fourth year in Yugoslavia. He has done a lot of things; I will not try to catalog them here. When we came out of Yugoslavia on our way to home leave and transfer to Bamako, Mali, George Kennan invited our family to stay at his farm near Gettysburg while I was on consultation in Washington. When I returned to the farm to begin our leave, Ambassador Kennan surprised us by turning up at the farm for several days on his way to a speaking engagement in Mexico. He is as kind and thoughtful in an informal setting as he is persuasive and well-spoken in more formal circumstances. We do not regret having spent that fourth year in Yugoslavia.

I didn't go farther than 25 miles outside of Belgrade for the first year I was stationed there. One reason the PAO had persuaded the Agency to add a deputy PAO slot was so he could get away from his desk from time to time. That meant I was on a short leash. Our embassy was on Kneza Milosa. It was a pleasant street, with imposing old buildings: the hospital where our younger son, Michael, was born; the American Embassy; the Albanian Embassy; Yugoslav State Security Headquarters. But if you looked behind the facade, behind the stern stone fronts, you were suddenly in another world - a rural world of pig styes and chicken coops, like a farm village. So the street front was like a movie set. The "real world" for most Serbs began on the other side.

After a whole year confined to Belgrade, I made my first real excursion - to Zagreb to attend the Zagreb fair. When the train pulled into the station there, I looked out at the cityscape and felt I was back in Europe again. But we did like Belgrade, and Yugoslavia, and we eventually traveled all over the country.

Q: Your boss for a while was Walter Roberts, who is also quite a name in the Information Service. How was he? He was of Austrian background?

HANEY: Austrian-Viennese. I think he went to school in England. He started out, I believe, with the Voice of America when it was still based in New York. Then he turned up in the European area of USIA in Washington. He was Deputy Director for Europe for a while. From there he went to his first overseas post, which was Belgrade. I was his deputy there.

Q: How did you get along with him?

HANEY: I had known Walter in Washington. We got along okay. He was very conscious of rank and position. When he arrived in Belgrade he didn't know much about the nitty-gritty of work by a USIS staff abroad. On his first day on the job, I was surprised that he wasn't in the PAO office at the embassy. He was down at our information center on ?ika Ljubina, where the press office was putting out the daily wireless file in Serbian. He was selecting which items would be translated for local distribution. It was apparently the kind of task with which he was familiar from his work with the Voice. But he caught on rapidly to the way you do things in the Foreign Service.

Q: We'll pick this up next time in 1962 when you're off to Bamako.

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Today is October 31, 2001. Bob, we're off to Mali in 1962. You were in Bamako for how long?

HANEY: From 1962 to 1964.

Q: What were you doing there?

HANEY: I was the public affairs officer. It was a small embassy.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

HANEY: Bill Handley.

Q: Did they get your names mixed up?

HANEY: Sometimes he would get my mail, but I noticed I never got invited to the President's palace. As you are aware, Mr. Kennedy, both names are Irish. The head of the political section was Bob Keeley. To spread things around a little, the family name of the head of the consular section was Kim.

Q: How were things going in Mali in those days?

HANEY: President Modibo Keita was trying to "build socialism." He was an experienced politician, having served in the Assemblï¿½e Nationale in France. Back in Mali, a former French colony that had become independent in 1960, Modibo - as he was almost universally known in his home territory - was elected president of the newly established republic. He was particularly adept at stumping the boondocks and pressing the flesh like a Chicago ward heeler. He was well educated, a socialist by persuasion and an admirer of "socialist" countries like the Soviet Union and its satellites, which were well represented in Bamako. The Chinese were helping Mali to expand rice culture. The Soviets had deployed an extensive team giving technical assistance to Air Mali, which was flying Ilyushin passenger aircraft.

We had a library in Bamako, but it had been closed to the public by the Malian Government, apparently because it was considered an advocate of capitalism and ipso facto inimical to socialism. When I arrived in Bamako as PAO, my USIS staff consisted of my American secretary; a young Malian woman, Marianne Sissoko, who had received a college education in France - a rarity, especially among Malian women - and who worked out of the closed library; and a Malian driver for the office jeep.

The constraints imposed on our operation meant that personal contacts, the occasional exchange visitor (e.g., Ralph Lapointe, a former big league shortstop who became a basketball coach at the University of Vermont and was sent to Mali by the State Department to train local teams), and unorthodox means of circulating printed material were the offbeat modus operandi we developed.

An example: The Government of Mali had its own information officers stationed in major regions of the country. In the town of Kayes, the government information officer was Moktar Dia, whom I had met in Bamako. Kayes is a provincial center in western Mali, close to the border with Senegal. Dia, like President Keita, spent a lot of time roaming his territory and asserting a government presence. He liked to have something to hand out on his rounds. I showed him some USIS material about the United States in French. He was impressed. As I had hoped, he asked if I could give him multiple copies that he could pass out to people he met on his visits through the Kayes region. It was a request I couldn't refuse.

Q: It sounds like the country was not just leaning but was practically in the Soviet camp. If they were closing down information activities, this is something that didn't happen in many countries, including in a lot of Bloc countries.

HANEY: That's true, although in Modibo's mind he was doing something positive. Socialism was his ideal. That the Soviet Union and a number of the Soviet satellites became firmly rooted in Mali was more a reflection of their enterprise and initiative than of Modibo's invitation.

Q: Did they have information centers that were open to the public?

HANEY: The Soviet embassy and their satellites usually had some kind of activity aimed at the public. But I must say that an information center in a country like Mali is not like operating one in Paris. The literacy rate was very low. The local language, Bambara, was not a written language, and efforts were being made to transcribe the sounds of Bambara in a Latin alphabet. But literacy was measured in Arabic or French, and the percentage of Malians who could read and write was in single digits.

Q: How did you go about your business?

HANEY: For the first few months I was the only officer at the post carrying out any kind of an information program. I developed contacts with Malian information officials and at the Foreign Secretariat, and I talked with as many Malians as I could. My favors to my Malian friend in Kayes are an example of how one had to work in a country where information was tightly controlled.

In its first couple of years of independence, Mali had succeeded in isolating itself, not only politically, but fiscally and physically as well. Its initial federation with Senegal, also newly independent, broke up, and Mali opted out of the French franc zone. Its currency was no longer convertible. The rail line to Dakar was cut at the Senegalese border. Mali's only access to the sea then became Abidjan, in the Ivory Coast, 600 miles south of Bamako as the crow flies, much farther on the meandering roads. Everything imported had to be hauled in by truck. My prized Citroï¿½n, which I had shipped from the States at my own expense because it was a foreign car, arrived from Abidjan a few weeks after we did. When I opened the large box in which it had been transported, I found the car covered about an inch thick with red laterite dust. Fortunately, among the few French who remained (many had left when they could no longer repatriate the francs they earned) was the owner of the Citroï¿½n garage. So I got the car cleaned up and put back into running order.

Speaking of the French garagiste reminds me how restricted were the means of recreation in Bamako. A favorite pastime on a Sunday afternoon was to play pï¿½tanque on the garage owner's well-kept lawn. Another diversion was to visit the rapids in the Niger River a couple of miles downstream. In the rainy season, the Niger was a mile wide at that point. But in the dry season, if you were agile enough, you could cross the river by leaping from one rock to another. A picnic out in the bush was another means of relaxing. A few hours rambling about left everybody in the party indistinguishably covered with laterite dust. On Sundays, le tout Bamako strolled out of town a few blocks to visit the zoo. If you missed the sign, "Jardin Zoologique," you would think it was just another piece of the savane, north of the jungle, south of the desert. The zoo was home to one mangy lion, an ostrich family, an elephant and a babble of baboons in an enclosure covered with wire netting. As you strolled up the open alleys of the zoo you would sometimes encounter wild baboons that had come in from the bush to visit their relatives doing hard time.

If you're stationed in Bamako, there's really no place close where you can get a break from the climate, the monotonous terrain and the isolation. So the R&R (Rest and Rehabilitation) break everybody got once during a two-year tour was welcome. Our family went on R&R in November 1963 to Spain, where we had physical exams at the U.S. Air Force base at Torrejï¿½n de Ardoz. Then we took a brief vacation in the Canary Islands.

I had checked in with the honorary American consul when we arrived in Las Palmas so we would have a point of contact if anybody was looking for us. At the end of the first week, we took our two younger children to an evening performance by a visiting Soviet circus. When we had returned to our hotel rooms shortly before 10:00 p.m., we got a telephone call from the honorary consul. "President Kennedy has been shot," he told me. I couldn't believe it. I thought the man was drunk, or hallucinating. But then the radio confirmed the terrible news, which left us dazed as it sank in.

I could not abide the thought of remaining on vacation; I wanted to get back to our post as soon as possible. But we were not all fit to travel. Our elder son, then eight years old, had shown symptoms of appendicitis earlier, during our first year in Bamako. His mother had taken him up to Germany to the military hospital in Frankfurt, but by then the symptoms had disappeared. In Las Palmas, however, they returned. A Spanish surgeon at the Queen Victoria's Hospital for Seamen told us, "If he were my son, I'd have the operation done here, before you return to Bamako."

So Mary stayed on in Las Palmas with Christopher, recovering from his operation, and his younger brother, Michael, aged three. Our daughter, Karen, aged seven, and I then flew to Conakry, Guinea, to wait for the next Air Mali flight inland to Bamako.

When we got to Bamako, I learned that the ambassador was away from the post; the DCM was chargï¿½ d'affaires. Modibo Keita had been out of Bamako, politicking in the countryside, when news came of Kennedy's assassination. Now back in Bamako, he had notified our embassy that he would come by to sign the book of condolences.

The chargï¿½ asked me to join him in receiving Modibo. The chargï¿½'s French was perfectly good, but it's sometimes useful to have an interpreter present at important meetings - it gives you time to think while the interpreter translates into English what you've already understood in French.

Modibo arrived, signed the book, and was invited by the chargï¿½ to take a seat in the ambassador's office. Modibo folded himself and his flowing white boubou de cï¿½rï¿½monie into a chair and began to talk about President Kennedy. Modibo Keita and Indonesian President Sukarno had been dispatched by the first Nonaligned Conference held in Belgrade in 1961 to bring word of the conference to President Kennedy. (Other nonaligned delegates who had attended the Belgrade conference made similar visits to important world leaders.)

It was clear from Modibo's spontaneous eulogy that he had been much impressed by JFK. He spoke in particular about the efforts by the administration to reduce the inequalities of racism in the United States. In all, it was a moving testimony to the legacy of our 35th president.

Q: Was this a country where public opinion mattered, or was it pretty much that the top man or top men ran things?

HANEY: Modibo and his government ran things, but he was not at all a dictator. Had he governed with a tighter rein he would not have been so easily overthrown in a coup a few years after we left Bamako.

When I went to Mali, I was a bit concerned because racial problems in the United States were commanding increasing attention in the media. Bobby Kennedy, the attorney general, was an advocate for true equality and was trying to get us accustomed to a new way of looking at race problems. Given the racial turbulence in America at that time, how would my white family and I be received in a country that was by then about 99 percent black? I was apprehensive.

My fear turned out to be ill-founded. When I was out in a village and invited by a new acquaintance to enter his thatched dwelling, I would see a picture of Bobby Kennedy prominently displayed. Malians looked positively upon the few Americans they encountered because of what our president and his attorney general were doing in the United States on behalf of the black population.

It was also great to be in a black country where a white person didn't attract special attention. You were just part of the crowd. Our youngest son, who was three years old at the time, would go with his mother to the market. He had a small carved wooden stool from the Dogon country that he carried around clapped to his behind. When his mother bargained for mangoes, he would plop down on the stool and patiently wait. Nobody paid special attention to him. He was just one more small person in a colorful assembly. In Yugoslavia, he and his stroller used to draw a crowd.

Q: My son, who was quite blond at the time and was about four, used to get so mad in Belgrade with people coming up and squeezing his cheek and saying, "Srce moje," "my little heart." We had to stop him when he started saying, "Ti si magarac," "You're a jackass."

HANEY: I can imagine. When Mary took our youngest child out for a walk in Belgrade, people would not only check out his clothing, but ask where the stroller came from. When I did a little research to find out what were the most popular books at the USIS library on ?ika Ljubina, I was told they were "Spring and Summer," and "Fall and Winter" - Sears Roebuck catalogs. We were in at the beginning of a new consumer society.

Q: In Mali, was there anything we were particularly pushing, trying to make people aware of? What were we trying to do?

HANEY: First of all, we were trying to get a feel for the best way to deal with the African countries. Our government had not paid much attention to that earlier. We sought to get on a sound footing with this country, which many Americans even today could not identify. Malians could certainly identify the United States, but they saw it as a stereotype. A major challenge was to replace misconceptions with understandable and persuasive images that would in time provide a more realistic and, we would hope, positive view of who we are and what we're up to.

Mali had not yet allowed our Peace Corps to serve in the country. But the U.S. Agency for International Development was well represented. Their personnel had close contact with an element of Malian society that a political officer would not be familiar with. The U.S. Army sent out a team headed by an American colonel to train potential Malian airborne troops in combat parachute jumps. Mary and I went out into the bush to witness a final training drop as the Malians neared "graduation." It turned out to be a rather exciting experience. I had parked my doughty Citroï¿½n away from the drop zone. But when a stick bailed out of one of the C-47 troop carriers, we had to run for it because the pilot had misjudged either the wind or the location. Fortunately, both Malian paratroopers and the Citroï¿½n survived the jump without injury.

Bamako, in my view, is not an ideal site for a capital. The reason it grew from a West African village into a town and eventually became capital of a country has more to do with military than civilian considerations. Progressive French conquests in West Africa toward the end of the 19th century brought a military party to the location of present-day Bamako. I can imagine that the French officer in charge was impressed by the high ridge shaped like a fishhook looming above the village and commanding the Niger River for kilometers in both directions. In my scenario, he queries a native: "What do you call that?" pointing to the ridge. "Koulouba," responds the terrified local. (It means "a big hill" in Bambara.) "A great spot for an outpost," thinks the Frenchman. And so it was,

All government buildings and the palace where the first family lives are today located up on Koulouba, the name that the French gave to the site of the citï¿½ administrative that grew up to replace the original military outpost. The hospital at Bamako is up there, retaining a quasi-military designation, l'Hï¿½pital du Point G. The town below is not a good site because it is so low and so flat and lies in the floodplain of the Niger River. To avoid flash-flooding during the rainy season, huge masonry ditches, about four to five feet deep and nearly 10 feet across the top line the main streets to carry the runoff.

Q: What passed for media in the country?

HANEY: There was one newspaper, published by the Information Secretariat. There was one radio station, Radio Mali. You could get the Voice of America if you had a shortwave receiver. I used to come home for lunch and try to catch a noon broadcast of the Voice of America or the BBC to find out what was going on in the world. Just preceding that broadcast, there was a program on Radio Mali aimed at teaching French to its listeners. A Malian "professor," who spoke good French but with the local accent, attempted to teach French to "Samba," his unlettered pupil. The professor would say something in French and then ask his pupil, Samba, to repeat it. The phrase I remember was, "Il y a quatre pharmacies ï¿½ Bamako"; "There are four pharmacies in Bamako." Samba would try, slowly and hesitantly squeezing out the first two or three words. The professor would repeat the sentence. Finally, Samba would spew it out in a rush. The professor, pleased at this progress, would say, "Hanh!" which is the Bambara way of saying, "Great!" or "You got it!" or "Right on!" or just "Oh."

The Voice of America broadcast a program in French that was aimed at that part of Africa. But not many people could listen because they didn't have shortwave.

Q: It sounds like we were essentially keeping the flag flying there.

HANEY: That's right. We were essentially a presence. And we had good contacts up on Koulouba. The ambassador and a few of his staff managed to get around the country a bit. I had visited Kayes, where we had an American basketball coach working with Malians. And I visited Sikasso, in the south of the country.

Mary and I made one great boat trip on the Niger in January 1964. The ambassador called me in to his office one day and said, "Why don't you and Mary take a trip with Mary Lee and me to Gao?" It was couched as a question, but it was really to be a command performance. It turned out to be the best thing we did in two years in Mali.

Gao is an important river town at the point where the Niger curves down out of the Sahara and begins to flow south toward its great delta in Nigeria. In its heyday, Gao was the point at which camel caravans coming west from Arab lands would connect with river traffic on the Niger. Our excursion was to take place in the heart of the dry season, when water levels upstream in the Niger were too low for large craft. So we had to go downstream by jeep to Mopti to board our boat, which was in reality a barge built like a boat but without its own power. It was towed by a tug pulling a towline a good 60 yards or more long.

Our craft bore the illustrious name, Libertï¿½. We were on the upper deck, where we had our own cabin and where the "first class" passengers ate their meals. The lower deck would have been called "steerage" had Ellis Island been our destination instead of Gao. It was crammed with Malians who prepared their own meals on charcoal braziers. Why the Libertï¿½ never caught fire I'll never know.

The Libertï¿½ made the roundtrip to Gao every two weeks - about a week in each direction - stopping at two or more small river ports every day. At each stop we were greeted by a throng of local inhabitants - the weekly visits were a big event. Our terminal was Gao, a provincial capital where the local governor had his "palace." That structure was - is - an impressive piece of architecture built by the French in colonial times. It was apparently designed by an architect whose favorite childhood story was "A Thousand and One Nights." The thick stone pillars of the palace were twisted like Christmas candy and about as colorful. The visual experience of the palace was psychedelic. The ambassador and his wife were guests of the governor; Mary and I stayed in what appeared to be the lone hotel, the Atlantide. I shall probably never find out how it acquired such a name in the middle of the desert.

Q: The country was Islamic?

HANEY: It was a mixture, principally Muslim, but with some Catholic converts and a very few Protestants converted by American missionaries who had spent much of their lives in Mali with meager results. The Catholic Church had done a very good job in planting itself in those parts of Africa that had been colonized by the French. They ran the only normal school in Mali, so that the whole educational system was generously sprinkled with its graduates. The Catholic influence was considerable and, so far as I could judge, mostly to the good. As one might expect in a former French colony, the influence of the ex-colonial power was still considerable, perhaps most apparent in education. French was the official language of Mali and the language taught in the schools. The Malian system of education emulated the French. If students in a particular grade of the lycï¿½e opened their textbooks to a certain page on a given day, you knew that students throughout France in the same grade were looking at the same page.

Your last question was whether Mali was Islamic. My answer was, "Yes," predominantly. Marianne Sissoko, the young woman who was my Malian assistant, had been educated in France; she was Catholic. Her father, at odds with the post-colonial government and living in France, had been the French-trained engineer in charge of operating the few railroads when Mali was a colony. Marianne had a boyfriend who was a lieutenant in the Malian army, living in barracks outside of Bamako. Occasionally, I'd give the two of them a lift in the jeep.

In due course, Lieutenant Traorï¿½, the boyfriend, proposed to Marianne. She wanted to say, "Yes," but first she consulted me. The prospective groom had suggested a Muslim ceremony. That would allow for multiple wives. "Don't do it, Marianne," was my advice. "Insist on a civil ceremony."

She must have been persuasive, for they ended up getting married in her Catholic church. I had been transferred to Saigon by the time of the wedding, but I had a full account of it from the number-two man USIA had by then sent me, Phil Pillsbury.

Four years after we had left Bamako, first for Viet Nam, then to Poland. I was in our embassy in Warsaw taking copy off the AP wire. A short item from Bamako caught my eye. A coup led by a certain Lieutenant Traorï¿½ had deposed Modibo Keita. President Traorï¿½ had moved into the palace up on Koulouba, along with the new first lady, my Marianne.

Several years later, Phil went back on a sentimental visit to Bamako. He took with him a letter from me for Marianne. Phil dined at the presidential palace with the new president and his wife and brought back the latest news from Mali. The two sons Marianne had borne Traorï¿½ subsequently came to Washington to attend Georgetown University, and Phil and I had dinner with them. Then, a few years later, Phil got a telephone call from the Malian Embassy in Washington, saying that a large package had arrived for him. Phil went down to pick it up. It contained two beautiful white wool throw rugs woven in Mali, one for Phil, one for Mary and me, from Marianne. They are elegantly simple. The very center of the white rugs is marked by an elongated black diamond enclosing a deep-red smaller diamond.

You asked me earlier how you communicate in a country like Mali. I can give you another example. I have mentioned the local zoo as a popular gathering place on Sundays. I had found at the office a Polaroid camera and some unused film of unknown age. Our children were particularly fond of the gazelles at the zoo. So on one hot Sunday we headed a few blocks out of town to the zoo. I loaded the camera and took it along to see if it worked. We stayed outside, near the entrance to the zoo, where you could get the best shot of the gazelles.

I aimed through the coarse wire mesh of the enclosure and snapped the shutter when a gazelle came within range. Then I did the hocus-pocus required to develop the film and get a print on the spot. After a wait of about 30 seconds, as I recall, I peeled off the print. It worked! The kids posed, a couple of gazelles posed, and I took more pictures.

By then it was late in the afternoon. The visitors to the zoo had begun to come down the central alley on their way home. Our little photo opportunity caught their attention. Soon we had a small crowd watching me produce practically instant photographs of whatever came within lens-shot. The crowd grew, and a man elbowed his way through to seek a favor.

"I'm the elephant keeper," he said, "and I'm just leaving for the day. But will you take my picture with the elephant if we go back up the alley?"

"Why, sure," I replied. After all, I was the public affairs officer at our embassy. My main responsibility was to try to put Uncle Sam's best foot forward and create a better understanding of what the United States was all about.

The elephant keeper led me and the crowd of some 35 people up the alley toward the gate to the elephant enclosure. The elephant, not very big, expressed mild interest. I looked for a suitable hole in the fence to poke the lens through. But my new friend, the elephant keeper, took me by the elbow. "You're coming in, too," he said. "Much better picture."

In front of that audience I could not show that I was scared stiff and still meet what I considered to be the obligations of my official position. So I acquiesced, and the keeper let us both into the enclosure and closed the gate behind us. He summoned an assistant to hold the elephant while he got up on its back. It was looking bigger and bigger. I backed off to what I hoped was a safe distance, aimed, focused, and released the shutter.

There was a high bench inside the fence next to the gate. I took the camera there and removed the film. The crowd watched expectantly. The keeper slid off the elephant, came to the bench, stood close by me on my left and bent over, as I did, to watch the film intently while I counted the seconds. The elephant lumbered in close on my right, nudged me in the ribs with a tusk, and began to explore the top of the bench with its trunk. The crowd still watched expectantly. Pressed up against the fence on the other side my heartless children appeared to think this was all great fun.

The seconds dragged. Finally, as the elephant reached for the camera, the time was up. I prayed and tore the print loose. Thank God! The picture was a good one. I wouldn't have to take another. I gave it to the elephant keeper, who held it up for the crowd to see.

I got out of the enclosure as fast as I could. The crowd dispersed, and we went home. Reflecting on that adventure later, I wondered what my superiors back in Washington would have thought. Here I was, at the height of the Cuban missile crisis, with a receptive crowd of hard-to-reach foreigners (known in the trade as a "target audience"), and I had failed to harangue them. All I did was make sure they knew I was an American.

Q: Also they were watching American technology, which helps. You left there in '64. Where to?

HANEY: I was transferred to Saigon.

Q: Was that by chance?

HANEY: It was by design-not mine. The USIA function in Viet Nam was growing by leaps and bounds, particularly with respect to overall staff size. When Maxwell Taylor became the ambassador, he tended to run the whole show as if it were the Joint Chiefs of Staff, his old fief. The public affairs officer, my boss, Barry Zorthian, eventually rose to the diplomatic rank of counselor of embassy. And what was merely the United States Information Service (USIS) in other countries became the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) in Saigon. Barry had asked for me to be his deputy because he knew me from a Washington assignment, when he was at the Voice of America and we both attended the USIA director's weekly meetings. He wanted someone who spoke French. (Although it turned out that Vietnamese would have been more useful.)

Before Barry got into the act, I had been slated to return to Washington as deputy to Lee Brady, USIA area director for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But one day in Bamako, with Mary in one bedroom with dengue fever and one of the kids in another bedroom with some unidentifiable malady, I received a one-page letter from the deputy director of the Agency, Tom Sorensen. It began, "Dear Bob." Inasmuch as I had never met Tom, I thought I had better sit down to read this letter. It informed me that I was being sent on direct transfer - no home leave - to Saigon.

Q: You were in Saigon from when to when?

HANEY: I got there in the summer of '64. I left in the summer of '65.

Q: What was the political-military situation in the summer of '64?

HANEY: We had a lot to do with the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV). In my first few days in Saigon, I learned that MACV was a highly influential player there, but I wasn't sure to whom they were referring when colleagues said, "McVeigh wants this," or "McVeigh rejects that." I confessed to an Army captain attached to JUSPAO that I didn't know who McVeigh was. He set me straight and told me, "Don't worry about it. Anybody here who isn't confused is simply ill informed."

That should establish the framework for an answer to your question about the status of things. They were pretty chaotic. We were counting on the South Vietnamese to pitch in wholeheartedly to save their own country. But their military was not up to it, and their hearts were not in it. Certainly they didn't have the dedication to their cause that distinguished the Viet Cong.

The atmosphere in Saigon was unsettling and unreal. It wasn't safe to venture very far outside the city because the Viet Cong owned the bush, the rice paddies, the tree lines. Several Americans were kidnaped, including one AID officer who one day drove a little too far out of town and was picked up and subsequently killed by the VC. The JUSPAO office was right downtown next to a cinema, and above the cinema were several floors that had been taken over for bachelor officers' quarters. On the top of the building was a flat roof with a low wall around it and a great view of the city. You could see almost as far as Tan Son Nhat, the airport shared by civil and military aircraft.

When you had finished for the day-and the days were long; sometimes it would be 7:00 p.m. or later before you could get away-you'd go up on the roof, where there was a restaurant and bar. Dressed in whites, drink in hand, you would look out over the city as the sun went down. First you'd see the fighter aircraft coming back to land at Tan Son Nhat. Then you'd see the gunships taking off to strike targets near the city. As it grew dark, you would begin to hear the harrump! of howitzers firing at pre-selected targets, like crossroads, where they might catch Charlie. Occasionally you could detect the muzzle flashes when the howitzers fired. Then you'd ask the garï¿½on for another dry martini.

Q: This was the Rex, wasn't it?

HANEY: Yes. Named for the cinema, I believe. It was quite a popular place for the military and some of the embassy people. For us, it was right next door and upstairs. To be in the scene but not really part of it gave you a weird feeling.

Q: What were you doing?

HANEY: As Barry's deputy, I managed the "front office" of JUSPAO, screened the cable traffic, assigned chores to the appropriate sections, e.g., films, press. When Barry was away from the post, I handled what we and the press called the "five o'clock follies," the daily press briefing. That was a difficult chore. You had to be very conscious of security. At the same time, you wanted to be as forthcoming as possible. The press in Vietnam really had more access to what we were doing there than I have ever seen. I was in the Army in Europe in the Second World War. Security then was very tight, and reporters didn't have the access that they eventually got in Vietnam.

The number-two man in the AP Saigon bureau was an aggressive type who drove a convertible around town and wore a scarf that rippled behind him like the signature neck gear of a World War I fighter pilot. He always spoke French when he careered about the city and its immediate environs; he didn't want to be mistaken for an American.

Driving just outside of Saigon one day he came upon a film crew and a small unit of ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) troops. He stopped, got out of his car and approached the person who appeared to be in charge of this activity, whatever it was. The AP reporter and the person who turned out to be the film director introduced themselves, and the AP reporter asked what was going on. The American director explained that he was making a film for USIA about the war in Vietnam for showing abroad. The scene he was about to shoot was an attack on a tree line on the other side of a rice paddy, a typical engagement in Vietnam. The AP reporter asked enough questions to get a story line going. Then he got back in his convertible and headed down the road.

He soon came to a crossroads cafï¿½ and bar, where he stopped and went in. The only other person in the place, besides the barman, was an unshaven U.S. Army lieutenant in muddy camouflage gear, who, it turned out, had just come in from the field after a week's combat. The AP reporter ordered a beer, introduced himself and asked the lieutenant, "What would you say if I told you that I had just seen a unit of South Vietnamese troops in clean uniforms with new weapons, and they're attacking a tree line, but it's all for a movie?

The lieutenant exploded. "We can't get the ARVN troops we need in the field, and here they are making a movie!" He gave the AP reporter some really useful quotes. The reporter went back to his office in Saigon, wrote his story and filed it. It turned up on our AP ticker the next morning. We also received a circular cable from USIA calling attention to the AP story and instructing posts worldwide not to use any faked battle footage in their film programs.

I verified with our film unit that the movie crew was indeed filming for USIA. In the AP account as it came back from New York with a Saigon dateline, the reporter described how a bus full of Vietnamese passengers came upon the scene. Hearing small arms fire (which was all blanks), the bus driver slammed on the brakes. All the passengers jumped out of the bus and dove into a ditch full of muddy water. Then the AP reporter quoted what the American lieutenant had said after he was told that an ARVN unit was being filmed making a fake attack on the Viet Cong. The movie crew said the bus story was a fabrication.

Armed with a version of the story that I could trust, I walked over to the AP bureau. The AP correspondent was at his desk, as was his boss, the bureau chief, talking on the phone. Addressing the number two man, I asked, "Peter, why did you hype your story about the USIA film we're making? You know damn well there was no bus screeching to a halt or frightened Vietnamese leaping into a ditch."

Peter agreed, "There was no bus. I was denied space on a fixed-wing aircraft the other day, and I just wanted to make sure that I would get the kind of transportation I need next time I need it."

That was the first - and happily the last - time I ever had to deal with Peter Arnett, whom I've since seen reporting from rooftops in parts of the world far removed from the 'Nam. Barry was away from the post, so I reported on my investigation to Ambassador Maxwell Taylor. He was philosophical about it, and we were both chagrined that USIA, in its haste to wipe its chin, had - if taken literally - removed from use abroad any movies about the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and classic Hollywood films like "Lost Battalion" and "Wings."

Q: Well, Peter Arnett had the reputation of being sort of anti-U.S. He was Australian. Were you dealing with a press corps that was hostile or, rather than report, trying to develop situations so they could report them? How did you find the press corps?

HANEY: There were some very good reporters in Vietnam. A few have since written books about the experience, and others made their reputations there. But there were a fair number who were there simply because a byline from Saigon or from Bien Hua would give you a better chance of landing on page one above the fold.

For those who were in television, there was a radical shift in emphasis in Vietnam. In earlier days, the story - a burning building, a protest march, a vote in the Senate - was the image that filled the screen, described by a disembodied voice in tones appropriate to the image. But in TV news from Vietnam, the image that most often appeared center-screen during your favorite news hour was not the story, but the correspondent. Typically he or she would be dressed for the field, hunched over and glancing uneasily from side to side against a visual background of billowing smoke and an audio background of warlike sounds - explosions, rat-tat-tat of machine guns, roar of engines. Anxiously, the correspondent would confide an oral version of the story to a microphone held close to the chest.

Q: Yes. I used to notice, for example, that the anchor back in New York would say, "Now we'll go to our correspondent, George Smith." Then a notice would go up saying, "George Smith reporting." Then the correspondent would say, "This is George Smith." Then he'd tell his story. Then he would say, "And this is George Smith signing off." Finally the anchor back in New York would say, "That was our report from George Smith." The name became very important.

HANEY: Yes. Some media people made their reputations in Vietnam - through first-class reporting, or simply because it was a great opportunity to get your byline on page one.

Q: What was your feeling about the information that you were giving out? Was this a problem?

HANEY: I was thrown into the breach for the "five o'clock follies" whenever Barry was away. I never had enough time to prepare myself, but it seems to me that there was insufficient coordination among the various elements under Maxwell Taylor's command that led to misunderstandings or sometimes caused us to withhold stuff that you didn't have to withhold. I'm not aware of any written policy spelling out what information could be used and what had to be withheld. We didn't think hard enough about that.

Q: Did you feel you were giving out true information?

HANEY: The information we gave out was as accurate as we could make it, but there were some cases where it wasn't precise enough. For example, there was one occasion where we had used tear gas to try to flush out some Viet Cong from a network of tunnels. The briefing officer had said something about "gas," not specifying what kind. Well, a number of correspondents led their stories with "U.S. forces use gas in Vietnam."

Q: I've got to stop at this point. We'll pick it up next time. We're in Vietnam, '64-'65.

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Today is July 30, 2002. How did you find the USIA side of things worked within the embassy in this '64-'65 period?

HANEY: The USIA function had been elevated to something that has never been seen at any other post before or since. As I have mentioned, it wasn't called "United States Information Service" (USIS), but "Joint United States Public Affairs Office" (JUSPAO). Ambassador Maxwell Taylor dealt with his embassy, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), and JUSPAO as he had dealt with the separate entities, U.S. Air Force, Army, Navy, when he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The ambassador met regularly with the heads of those elements; their deputies were most often the officers who did the legwork. We deputies logged a lot of chopper time visiting units in the field for briefings. The deputies would travel in one helicopter, escorted by two helicopters for security. Each chopper had GIs riding shotgun - actually .50-caliber machine guns. At first, the sliding doors were left open during flight, but they tended to fall off, so they were simply removed. We flew at an altitude of at least 3,000 feet to avoid small arms fire. The air was hot and sticky on the ground, but at that height with all doors off the chopper, it was breezy and even chilly. I have been a little bit skittish about flying ever since I was in a glider crash in Europe during World War II. I took my vintage Rolleiflex with me on chopper flights and sat belted in on one of the seats facing out an open door, toes on the sill. I snapped photographs to take my mind off where I was and what I was doing. I probably have more pictures of rice paddies than I really need.

We would head out just about every week for a briefing in the field, flying from Tan Son Nhat, the airport that handled both civilian and military traffic. Our "Huey" (as everybody called the HU-1B Army helicopter) would climb rapidly to a breezy 3,000 feet, and off we went across the lush countryside to our destination. The landing pad was generally a soccer field at a local school. To avoid fire from the ground, the pilot would "corkscrew" down for a landing. That meant turning the chopper almost on its side, losing a lot of lift, and dropping down in a spiral, leveling off for a slow landing from a few feet above the soccer field. This maneuver was routine for old-timers, but first-time passengers would sometimes get a surprise. On one flight, a newcomer had put his lunch bag and a thermos bottle under his seat. Unlike a Boeing 747, which gently banks and sweeps majestically to right or left, leaving your cup of coffee unspilled on the tray table, the Huey in a corkscrew maneuver does not generate the same centrifugal force. When the Huey pilot turned us almost on our side to spiral down, the newcomer's lunch and thermos scooted right out the open door.

Q: Barry Zorthian was a major figure there. How did he operate?

HANEY: Barry was very businesslike, very serious, knowing exactly what he wanted, and making sure that you, too, knew exactly what he wanted. He succeeded in increasing JUSPAO staffing to something like 140 people. That was an extraordinary number of slots in that single-country operation compared with the number of Foreign Service officers in the information and cultural function worldwide.

When I turned up in Washington for consultation on my way from Bamako to Saigon, the personnel people said, "This is urgent. We want you out there right away." I had to defer home leave. I did meet the deputy director of USIA, Tom Sorensen, who had sent me my one-page invitation to Saigon. He said to me, "You know Barry, and you're aware he's asked for you. We want you to tighten the reins on Barry. We are giving him what we think he needs, but he keeps asking for more."

At that point, I should have said, "I resign." I should never have accepted that kind of charge. I left for Saigon with people in Washington thinking that I was going to be able to slow Barry down. It didn't work and never could have. I'm surprised I lasted a year.

Q: Often the deputy of a particularly hard-charging person ends up following behind cleaning up the mess, smoothing feathers. How was Zorthian regarded by his fellow officers in other sections of the embassy?

HANEY: He seemed to command a good deal of respect in the other agencies and among his counterparts. I didn't really have much cleaning up to do. When Barry said, "That's it," that was it.

Q: How about the people supporting him? Did they respond to his leadership?

HANEY: Yes. Some of them grumbled a little bit. I got in trouble once after Barry had been away. He traveled rather frequently, came back to Washington, stayed at the White House a couple of times, made contacts around town. While I was in charge in Barry's absence, one of the guys on the staff came to me and said, "I sure would like to take off on Sunday. I haven't been able to play golf for months." (Most of us worked Saturdays and Sundays when Barry was there.) I said, "Sure, go ahead and play golf." Barry learned of this and chewed the guy out for not showing up on a Sunday and playing golf instead. Barry didn't say anything to me about it, but I heard about it from the fellow who had been reprimanded. The staff more or less fell in line, and that was it.

Barry had a rough way of speaking. If I approached him with a question, he would say, "Yo, Bob." He successfully projected a tough image. One newcomer on the staff quietly asked me one day if it was true that Barry was called "Zorro" by his intimates. I told him, "Don't try it."

Q: Let's talk about the Vietnamese press. Did you have much to do with the indigenous press there?

HANEY: I had nothing to do with that.

Q: What about the foreign press, including the American press? Were they seen as the enemy that they were later?

HANEY: Everyone in the embassy and in all of the agencies became very cautious in dealing with the American media. I had worked as a newspaperman, so I was familiar with the vagaries of the press. But the way the corps of American correspondents operated in Vietnam exceeded anything I had ever seen before. Their demands for access to people, information, transportation were excessive and incessant.

Of course, Vietnam was a continuing major drama for the United States and a story every correspondent wanted to cover. Many media plucked their most experienced and best known people to cover Vietnam. They joined a large group of correspondents less well known but no less eager. One correspondent for the New York Daily News and his wife practically lived in the JUSPAO offices. They would eat meals in our snack bar. They may have had a hotel room someplace where they slept, but if I wanted to find the correspondent, I would first look around JUSPAO. He was a faithful presence at the "five o'clock follies." He might try to get some news by saying, "AFP is reporting that MACV has asked for another 2,000 troops for deployment here. Have you got any details on that?" The JUSPAO spokesman would say, "No, Sam, I have nothing on that." Sam would say, I've got the story, I just need some details." Spokesman: "Sorry, Sam, I just can't help you." Sam: "Can't you give me some details even in general terms?"

Q: These were still the early days. Was the press really seen by the military as hostile at that time?

HANEY: The military tended not to trust the press and to say as little as possible. They were not used to a crowd of media representatives homing in like a swarm of bees.

Q: When you left there, what happened?

HANEY: Barry was absent again, and I was in charge. This was about a year after I had arrived. A cable came in from USIA notifying JUSPAO that the Agency was transferring me to Washington. I never did get any explanation from Barry. I think he was just not happy with me because I would raise questions about the need for staff increases or the best way to deal with South Vietnamese officials, who were prone to say "Yes" under pressure but wouldn't deliver. I was probably doing that because I was stupid enough to heed Sorensen's injunction to try to slow Barry down a bit. That was next to impossible, and it was foolish to try. Since I wasn't playing Barry's game - that he could always get what he wanted - he showed me how the game was played and got somebody else.

Q: You went back to Washington in '64 then.

HANEY: Yes.

Q: What were you doing in Washington?

HANEY: We got some home leave, including the leave we should have had when we were transferred from Bamako. I did odd jobs in the Agency. I worked on foreign press reporting, with the policy people. I was interested in Eastern Europe because I spoke Russian and Serbian and had always wanted to serve in the most important of the Slavic countries. I talked with the area director for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe about an assignment there. A few days later he called me. He said, "We've got a job coming up in Poland. You don't call it 'public affairs officer' in Poland, but it's the same function. You'd be 'head of the Press and Cultural Section.'" Poland at that time was still very much a communist country. I said, "That sounds great." I spent about two or three months in Washington and was then transferred to Poland.

Q: You were in Poland from '65 until when?

HANEY: '68.

Q: You were basically the PAO.

HANEY: It was the equivalent of PAO.

Q: You were the head of USIA's operations there. Who was the ambassador?

HANEY: John Gronouski. I can't remember who the departing ambassador was, but the incoming ambassador shortly after we got there was Big John.

Q: Somebody was telling me that they accompanied Gronouski...

HANEY: I know the story.

Q: Do you want to tell the story?

HANEY: In 1965, John Gronouski, a former university professor and Midwestern Democratic politician, had been removed as U.S. Postmaster-General to open that slot for a more prominent Democrat, Larry O'Brien. Lyndon Johnson called Gronouski in, put his arm around his shoulders and said, "John, I want you to be my ambassador to Poland. But the job as I see it is really bigger than that. I would like you to keep an eye on those other countries out there, too." Gronouski knew what was happening. He was being moved out to make room for another Democrat whose political connections were more extensive and whose name recognition was greater. (Gronouski's successor, Larry O'Brien, had been Special Assistant to the President for Congressional Relations beginning with the Kennedy administration in 1961; following his stint as postmaster-general, he became Chairman of the Democratic National Committee.)

Gronouski in essence saluted, said, "Yes, Sir, Mr. President," and began to consider what the new job might encompass, in the way of perks as well as duties. He and his family set off for Warsaw in the late fall of 1965. They stopped in Paris for some shopping. Then on to Rome for an audience with the Pope. Next Vienna, where they acquired loden coats for the Baltic. Winter descended on Northern Europe a little early in 1965, so Big John left his family in Vienna until he got settled in, and he took the train to Warsaw through Czechoslovakia.

A young officer from the Consular Section of the Warsaw embassy had been sent to Vienna to escort the ambassador to his first post. The escort officer was of Polish origin and fluent in the language. (Despite his name, Gronouski scarcely knew a word of it.) Gronouski and his escort stayed up late as the train wended its way north through an early snowfall.

The next morning, the escort officer went to awaken Gronouski an hour or so out of Warsaw. He knocked on the door of the compartment a couple of times before he got a muffled answer from inside. Big John came to the door to admit his escort. Then he rolled up the shade on the big window in his sleeping compartment. Outside, it was overcast, and the ground was covered with snow. In the foreground some small black lumps hopped about - those were crows. Farther back were the hulking black shapes of evergreens. There was no horizon; the dirty snow in the foreground merged seamlessly with the dirty gray of the sky.

After taking in this bleak scene for a few seconds, Gronouski turned away from the window and said, "Lyndon, you sonuvabitch, what have you done to me?"

Q: Gronouski was Polish.

HANEY: Half-Polish, I believe. Although he had extensive connections with Polish communities in the Midwest, he had little knowledge of the language.

Q: When you got there in 1965, what was the situation in Poland vis-ï¿½-vis the other countries, the economy and the political situation?

HANEY: The economy was not doing very well. The Solidarno?? (Solidarity) movement did not yet exist. The population was restless, but it was kept well under control. The head of the Party was W?adys?aw Gomu?ka. He kept a very tight reign on everything. He probably was a stiffer, more severe leader than the Soviet leadership at that time. In '67, the "Six-Day War" erupted in the Middle East. Gomu?ka had been so opposed to the Israelis and so supportive of the Arab position that he was out in front of the Soviet Union in that regard. The Arab forces were defeated in six days, and Israel emerged from this trial still in charge of its own people and its own territory, having achieved a victory that most Arabs will remember for a long time. The dramatic result of the war resonated among Poles because they, too, saw themselves historically as a courageous people surrounded by foes whose defeat was achieved in the end by heroism on the battlefield. This abstract identification of common causes was embarrassing for Gomu?ka, who had so publicly and firmly supported the Arab side. He then took steps to see to it that some of the Jews who were in the government were either dismissed or downgraded. Mary and I knew a number of Poles active in Polish cultural life. But they just disappeared from the screen for some time. Apparently they considered that it was not prudent in that climate to be seen with an American.

Gomu?ka was really quite harsh with his people and didn't read the signs correctly. The only spontaneous public demonstration of joy, pleasure, or excitement that we saw while we were in Poland was when Charles de Gaulle visited Warsaw. He rode in an open car through the streets, and thousands of Poles came out to cheer him. It was a spontaneous demonstration, not something organized by the government. Poles had a warm spot in their hearts for the French, perhaps stemming from the days when many Poles had worked in the mines around Lille.

Although overt manifestations of it were rare, Americans in the embassy were all under fairly tight surveillance. Our quarters were bugged. Telephones were monitored all the time. Well, maybe I shouldn't say "all the time." The first August that we spent in our comfortable house in a pleasant part of town, the telephone suddenly stopped working. We knew it was bugged, but at least it had always worked. I asked the embassy Administrative Section to call the Warsaw equivalent of the telephone company to send someone out to our house to correct the problem. The Poles sent a crew of two technicians, who checked the lone telephone set. Next they checked the lines inside the house. Finally, they took a look outside, and then we saw them conferring.

At last, they came up and knocked on the front door. I opened the door and went outside with them. Without saying a word, one of the men pointed to wires that led from the attic of our house to the attic of the house next door. Our house had no direct connection with the telephone lines that ran from pole to pole along the street. August was the annual vacation period in Poland. The guys who were monitoring us from the attic next door just closed everything down when they took the month off. Service was restored on September 1.

You would often hear all kinds of weird noises when you picked up the phone. Sometimes, there would just be heavy breathing on the other end. One night our daughter, Karen, then nine years old, answered a call. She put down the receiver and ran in, breathless, to tell us, "Hurry, come to the phone; Gomu?ka's on the line." When I took the phone, there was nobody there.

What happened was that the person calling had realized that he had dialed the wrong number when a child answered in English. "Pomy?ka," he said, Polish for "wrong number." If you don't speak much Polish, the confusion is understandable.

It's amazing how quickly Foreign Service children repeatedly adapt to a whole new set of circumstances in their lives. Every two years or so, the scene changes drastically: different country, different city, different house, different neighbors, different language, different friends, different school. Without being instructed, they seem to insert themselves into the new scene more rapidly than the parents can imagine. Mary and I recall how, one night in Belgrade, we discovered that our daughter included President Tito in prayers that she said out loud before falling asleep.

Continuity of the children's education could not be assured in the Foreign Service. In the year and a half between the spring of 1964 and the late fall of 1965, our children attended schools in Bamako, San Francisco, Saigon, Baguio, Washington, DC, and Warsaw - six schools spread around the globe. They ranged from a one-room school in Bamako with one or two pupils per grade, to the National Cathedral School for Girls in Washington, DC. In 1969, we took our elder son, Christopher, to Andover in Massachusetts to register him for the equivalent of high school. As we said goodbye after our interview with the house master, Christopher asked, incredulous, "You mean I'm going to be here four whole years?"

Q: Did the police try to set up traps or provocations in Poland? In the Soviet Union, they were doing this fairly frequently.

HANEY: I never heard of such activity. Occasionally you would notice that you were being tailed by the traditional black Mercedes. But that was simply to remind you that Big Brother was watching. We were under covert surveillance, but that's obviously not the kind you notice. Once a week, embassy families would go to the embassy theater to see an old American feature film that the Armed Forces circulated to their attachï¿½s abroad. One film included a tense scene between a man and a woman standing in the street. Finally, the man says, "Let's go inside where we can talk." It broke up the house.

Q: What sorts of things were you able to do during this time?

HANEY: The most effective work was through personal contacts. From time to time we would show a film in our residences for invited Poles. We were not allowed to circulate the USIA magazine, America, which was distributed in the Soviet Union. We were reined in much more closely than in Yugoslavia.

Q: You were saying the artistic world sort of dried up for you.

HANEY: It did immediately after the Six-Day War. We continued to go to the theater in Warsaw. An interesting aspect of life in Poland is that historically and traditionally, the culture - particularly literature and the theater - is a sidelong means of expressing what you cannot express directly. A popular play called "Tango" was being shown in the main theater in Warsaw while we were there. It's the story of a stranger who inserts himself into a household and gradually takes over. It ends with a scene in which the new master cranks up an old-fashioned phonograph, puts on a record and obliges the former head of the family to tango with him. The interloper did not have to carry a flag with the hammer and sickle to make the point for a Polish audience. Poles had learned over the years to make their point indirectly.

The not-so-hidden agenda was more characteristic of cultural life in Warsaw than in the newly acquired western part of the country that had been added when the frontiers, both east and west, were shifted to the west after World War II. Poles who had lived in the eastern Polish city of Lwï¿½w before the war were displaced to western Poland around Wroc?aw (the former German Breslau). This transplanting of a population had social and cultural consequences. The median age of the new population in the '60s was in the teens. The outlook was more modern, more progressive, less bound by a depressing memory of past injustice or foreign occupation. Poles called that part of the country the Dziki Zachï¿½d, the "Wild West." Poland at that time represented a remarkable congruity: The population was about 90% or more Polish, Polish-speaking, and Catholic. That was a rarity in today's world. I hope someone has done a social and cultural study of that phenomenon.

Q: Did the Polish-American community play much of a role in our relations in those days? The second largest city of Polish people in the world was Chicago.

HANEY: Many Americans of Polish origin came to visit. And more Poles knew more about some aspects of American life than did the inhabitants of any other country where we served, including France. As you point out, a Polish population is the predominant minority in several of our large cities. There is, consequently, a richer, deeper connection than we have with most of the countries of the world. But with a government like Gomu?ka's, no matter how much goodwill you have among ordinary people, there are tight limits on what you can do in the way of information and cultural programs.

Q: Had you been able to make any real contacts with the people there?

HANEY: Aside from necessary contacts with officials in a communist government, we were most closely associated with people in the cultural sphere. Forget about the press; they hewed the line. Mary put together and had printed up and distributed to Western embassies a weekly rundown of cultural events in Warsaw - theater, concerts, exhibits. As I mentioned, our cultural contacts withdrew for a while after the Six-Day War.

Q: How did Gronouski use you and the USIA?

HANEY: He didn't give us much direction. I never really felt that he had an agenda or precise objectives.

Q: Did he get around, or was he pretty much under wraps?

HANEY: Much of the travel he did was not within Poland. He didn't forget what Lyndon had told him: "I expect you to keep an eye on those other countries, too, John." One of his first trips was to the Soviet Union. Mary and I were invited to accompany him, together with other staffers and their wives, but we were not able to make the trip at that time. Subsequently, we did travel with the Gronouskis to Yugoslavia.

When the ambassador made these junkets, he would take along the officers in charge of the Political Section, the Economic Section, and the Press and Cultural Section. In the case of Yugoslavia, the heads of all those sections had served there earlier. We accompanied the ambassador and his wife, and, at the ambassador's suggestion, we took our families with us. It was summer, and not the best time to make an official visit there because the American ambassador to Yugoslavia was away from the post, and the embassy was busy preparing for an important cultural visit - the New York Philharmonic was going to perform in Dubrovnik.

Landing at the Zemun airport outside of Belgrade, we were met by the chargï¿½ d'affaires. He had not started out as a career Foreign Service officer, but was a "lateral entry." As was sometimes the case, he was holier than the Pope when it came to protocol. When Ambassador Gronouski arrived, the chargï¿½ was apparently prepared for something of a formal greeting.

Accompanying the chargï¿½ to the airport were at least five embassy drivers: The Warsaw contingent was a crowd. Those of us who had served in Belgrade knew the drivers - they used to moonlight as waiters at parties we gave. And the drivers knew all the children. In some cases they had driven them to school every day. So when our rag-tag party came off the plane into the Zemun airport, the Yugoslav drivers rushed up in great excitement to greet the children and their parents like long-lost friends. The chargï¿½, leaning with stiff composure on the umbrella he held in front of him, was unceremoniously crowded out of the way before he could say a word to Ambassador Gronouski, who, like the drivers, was not much given to protocol.

Q: Were there any political movements in Poland at the time you were there? It was a pretty cold period, wasn't it?

HANEY: It was a very tight.

Q: Did you get any feel for relations between Poland and the Soviet Union?

HANEY: So far as we could tell, they were "correct" but not warm. There is not much love in the Polish heart for Russians.

Q: I've talked to people who were there during the '70s who said we were convinced that there probably were at least three dedicated communists in all of Poland. At the time you were there, were people pretty well mouthing the Marxist line?

HANEY: They weren't saying much of anything. They didn't follow the party line, and they would endanger themselves if they were outspoken about how they really felt. Every public manifestation was by order and scripted. As I mentioned, the only exception we ever saw was de Gaulle's visit to Warsaw.

Mary and I had friends in the Israeli embassy who had introduced us to the Yiddish Theater in Warsaw and to Ida Kaminska, its grande dame, who had revived it after the Second World War. Israeli diplomats - including our friends - were kicked out of the country at the end of the Six-Day War. Representatives of most of the western embassies in Warsaw went out to the airport to see them off in a show of solidarity. The Polish authorities had organized a crowd to demonstrate against the Israelis as they departed. Two lines of demonstrators made an alley on the tarmac that the Israelis would have to pass through to board the commercial aircraft. As they ran this gauntlet, the demonstrators showered them with verbal abuse. It was so disgusting and so shameful that I went up to a Polish security officer to tell him what I thought of it. Fortunately, I was so outraged that I spoke in French instead of Polish, so he didn't know what I was saying. A Polish film crew shot the whole departure scene. I got back to our house in time to see the local evening TV news and was relieved that the scene at the airport was apparently judged too vile to show. So far as I know, the footage was never used.

Q: Was this pushing blatant anti-Semitism?

HANEY: That was one of the ways that Gomu?ka operated.

Q: And his wife was Jewish.

HANEY: Yes. Unfortunately, anti-Semitism in Poland had a long history.

Q: It has deep roots in Poland. I take it that during the time you were there, there hadn't been any real change.

HANEY: No.

Q: What about contacts at universities there? The one thing that we certainly had would be textbooks, magazines. The Soviet Union really wasn't producing anything that was intellectually challenging except for the sciences. I would think the Poles at the university level would have a thirst for what the West had and what we had.

HANEY: Yes, that's true. We did have some contacts with the Polish academia. And "counterpart" funds - non-convertible local currency (zlotys) paid to the United States in exchange for wheat, for example - could be used to pay for such things as U.S. medical training.

Q: In '68, where did you go?

HANEY: In '68, I returned to Washington for a home assignment. I became the head of a unit, the Media Reaction Staff, in USIA's Office of Intelligence and Research. Five days a week we compiled a roundup of foreign media reaction to subjects of interest to policy-makers in the Agency and the Department of State; a copy also went to the White House. We drew our information from cables filed by posts abroad and from the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS).

Q: You did this from '68 to when?

HANEY: I had gone out as an inspector a couple of times. In '73, I was on the inspection team that went to India.

Q: During this time, '68 to the early '70s, the foreign press must have been rather harsh vis-a-vis Vietnam. This can't have been a very happy summary.

HANEY: Vietnam figured in our reports, but it didn't take over. The Vietnam War was often harshly criticized abroad, but I don't recall that it was a problem for us in reporting on the foreign media. We reported what they said.

Q: How did you feel that the European press was treating this?

HANEY: The European press was covering it the way they saw it, and that picture wasn't very good. It wasn't very good here at home either. I wouldn't say that the European coverage was "anti-American," although Europeans were certainly against the war.

Q: Your media reaction report must have been quite useful to policymakers.

HANEY: Yes, it was a well-received item. When Nixon went to the Far East, our unit was asked by the White House to do a special report on his trip daily to be sent to the presidential party, slugged for Kissinger. It would be transmitted through White House channels. The USIA area director for the Far East, Dan Oleksiw, was to accompany the presidential party. When he learned that we would be filing a special report daily, he called me down to his office. "Since I'm going to be with the president," he said, "I want you to send the report slugged for my attention." I pointed out that the White House was handling transmission of the report, which would be marked for Kissinger's attention.

"Well," he said, "ask them to put my name on it. I'll see that it gets to the president's party." It was awkward; I told him I would try. My contacts at the White House were amused, but did not object.

The day after President Nixon's departure, I took our first special report over to the White House to be sent to the party on Guam. It was marked "for Oleksiw." Late in the day the White House received a cabled query from the president's party: "Who's Oleksiw?"

Q: Were you ever told, "Oh, don't put in some bad news?"

HANEY: No. We exercised our best professional judgment and played it the way it was. We were never asked to make things look rosier - or worse - than they were.

Q: You went on an inspection to India.

HANEY: Yes, in '73, I went with a USIA inspection team to India. The head of the team was a former USIA officer. He had been Agency policy chief and ended up as ambassador in Tegucigalpa. India is a big post, one of the biggest in the world. And the branch posts in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta were larger than most USIS establishments anywhere. We were there for more than a month, as I recall. I visited all the posts. The ambassador heading the inspection had to return to Washington early, and I was put in charge. I wound up the inspection and sent off the report. Subsequently, I was asked to go back to India for six weeks as head of a two-man team to help the post come into compliance with some of the recommendations of the inspection report.

Q: During your inspection in '73, what was your impression of the USIA operation in India?

HANEY: Dan Oleksiw, the former area director for the Far East, had gone to the field by that time as PAO in India. Daniel Patrick Moynihan arrived as the new ambassador. By the time I got there, Moynihan and Oleksiw had arranged a divorce of convenience. Oleksiw was sitting in the PAO's residence, a well-appointed, large house on a big lot in downtown New Delhi, awaiting orders bringing him back to Washington. The new public affairs officer, Al Hemsing, hadn't arrived yet. It was a bit awkward to carry out an inspection where there was no public affairs officer; the deputy PAO was in charge.

Oleksiw had a large staff, both in New Delhi and in the branch posts. The inspectors felt that the outgoing PAO was given to micro-management, even of operations in the branches. The PAO in Calcutta told me that he and his staff felt that they ought to check with New Delhi before they visited the men's room, the control from New Delhi was so tight. The inspectors concluded that the branches should have a freer rein. India is a vast country, and the regional differences are relevant to carrying out an information and cultural program.

The local Indian staff was well educated, fluent in English as well as Hindi (and/or Urdu), well trained - the best I have ever seen in the many USIS posts where I have served or visited. Educated Indians thought so highly of employment with USIS that we had some locals working in the USIS press section, for example, who were fully as competent, and just as highly regarded, as Indians in good positions in the media world.

Q: You were there from when to when?

I was assigned to New Delhi in '74, first as information officer, subsequently as policy officer when the IO job was abolished following a reshuffling of the staffing as a result of the inspection. I left New Delhi in '77.

Q: How were relations between India and the United States?

HANEY: They were tolerable. There was at that time no big issue, as there is now regarding Kashmir and precarious Pakistani-Indian relations, a serious concern because both countries are now nuclear powers.

Q: How did you find the intellectual climate? Did the Indians in New Delhi have the equivalent of an intellectual class such as existed in France?

HANEY: Yes, but it wasn't really intellectual attainment that determined who belonged to the class. The caste system is still paramount.

Q: Brahmin, and so on.

HANEY: Yes. I've served in some very interesting countries. Mary and I both feel that our favorite post was Yugoslavia. We had good relations with ordinary Yugoslavs, it's a beautiful country, and we traveled extensively.

Q: My wife and I have the same feeling.

HANEY: On the other hand, I can't imagine any other country so complicated or so fascinating as India. It is mind-boggling. Many foreigners, and particularly Americans, are put off when they are exposed to India because it is a land of so many contradictions. Indians seem able to hold in their heads at the same time two notions that we would consider mutually exclusive. I think Americans are more methodical, more "rational," so this is hard to get used to when you first go out there. You also are put off by the scale of squalor on the one hand and awed by the natural and man-made beauty on the other. Just walking down the street in New Delhi or in Calcutta you may smell the open sewer one moment and the next moment you smell jasmine.

The failure in Indian society and culture to communicate from top to bottom and vice versa is a hindrance to the cohesion of the country. It's difficult to conceive of a land in which there are 22 languages used by the inhabitants for day-to-day communication, yet the link language is foreign: English. It is a challenge to try to understand a country where there are such vast differences in outlook, social and economic standing, religion and languages.

In Kerala (southwest India), the inhabitants use an alphabet (Malayalam) in which all of the characters are composed of curved lines. In New Delhi (Hindi), the characters incorporate both straight and curved lines. In Malayalam, written language was first cut on palm leaves. If you cut a straight line on a palm leaf, the leaf is going to split. So every mark has to be curved to preserve the record. There are many such anomalies in Indian culture.

When India became independent in 1947, statesmen of the new country had to write a constitution. It manages to embody some of the same contradictions that pop up in less formal aspects of life in India. Indian leaders who were fans of Abraham Lincoln opted for flexible means of dealing with threats to the state. Indians who wished to emulate their former British masters retained the colonial power's provisions for declaring a state of emergency. The result was that the constitution has sections that are like a car with the brake and the accelerator on the same pedal.

Q: Were you in USIA able to make significant contacts among the ruling class, or was America considered almost beneath them?

HANEY: Indians, whatever their class, take a great interest in the United States. Over the years, this interest was promoted by Americans and Indians alike after some nimble mind invented the phrase, "the world's two biggest democracies." It's got a ring to it that has seduced many a speech writer, not to speak of herds of newspaper correspondents. I was first faced with the dilemma it posed when I was asked to draft a speech at our embassy in New Delhi for an officer who shall remain nameless. He wanted that phrase stuck in the speech somewhere.

Our countries are both big - India big enough to account for most of a subcontinent; the United States three times as large. India comes out way on top in regard to population. So both countries are fairly described as "big democracies," if all you're concerned about is size and nominal form of government.

Q: How did our message fit? Were we getting whatever our message was across to the Indians? They had had a very close relationship with the Soviets.

HANEY: The relationship with the Soviets was more a matter of convenience at the time. There is-or was while I was there-among the upper class a great deal of admiration for the United States for human rights, for democracy, for its institutions, its education. A certain amount of British snobbery has persisted in the Indian whose family is able to send him to England for his higher education. There is an apocryphal story of the son in a well-to-do family that spoke English as well as Hindi. They sent this young man to England to be educated, and he didn't make it. But when he came back and entered Indian life again, he had calling cards made, with his name, of course, and the honorific, "Oxford, failed." Unfortunately, many at that level in Indian society became confused about where the sun rises - over the Bay of Bengal, or over the English Channel. Also, unfortunately, the successful upper class has little connection with the great mass of Indians at the lower economic and social levels.

The Indian government under Mrs. Gandhi teetered from democracy toward authoritarianism in 1975 when a judge in Mrs. Gandhi's home constituency found her landslide victory in the 1971 elections invalid because civil servants had illegally aided her campaign. She reacted to demands for her resignation as prime minister by persuading the president of India to declare a state of emergency. She ordered the arrest of her critics, including all opposition leaders except the communists. Opposition newspapers were shut down.

Early during the state of emergency, Mary and I attended a reception given by a well-to-do Sikh who had extensive connections in upper-level New Delhi society. The occasion was the visit to New Delhi of Daniel J. Boorstin, Librarian of Congress. Guests included the editor of the daily Hindustan Times, closed down by Mrs. Gandhi, and other anti-government figures. Also present were a number of Mrs. Gandhi's staunch supporters. Views on both sides were strongly held, but the discussion of the state of emergency at that reception was civil, even cordial. It brought home to us how tightly bound and insulated were the members of the upper class in India.

Q: In our looking at this, where this stratum seems to run horizontally and not vertically, were we making attempts to penetrate down below what one might call the "chattering class," getting down to the businessman, the working class, and even farther down?

HANEY: Yes, we were. Our efforts were directed to representatives of what might be called "the middle class" - professionals, businessmen, educators - who were not at the top of the caste system, as well as to the upper class. In my view, this "middle class" is a more important audience, because that thin layer on top is not really going to determine where India goes.

During the emergency, things were pretty tight. Mrs. Gandhi's agents were harsh and cruel. Her son, Sanjay, was responsible for rooting out illegal residents and for carrying out sterilization in the poor "inner city" community of New Delhi where there were many Muslims. Not far from our house, his men came and bulldozed a small settlement on the edge of the city where people were living in what looked like large crates. This was in a section of "dense, mixed jungle" (as the map of New Delhi described it). The squatters had carved out a little site for themselves and were living there under desperate conditions.

It was summertime. Mary had gone home to Washington for a bit to see the kids, who were in school here. One evening, when I was reading a book in our house on Kotilya Marg, I heard some sort of cackling laughter in our little courtyard. The windows were shut because the air conditioning was on. I resumed reading, and I heard the noise again quite distinctly. I went out through the kitchen into the courtyard, and there was a completely naked woman who was obviously out of her mind. She was talking gibberish. I got the houseboy to come down from his quarters behind the house. He persuaded the woman to leave. I think she was from the squatters' settlement that had been razed by Sanjay's people.

By early 1977, Mrs. Gandhi believed that things had cooled down enough to remove restrictions, free political prisoners, and hold elections. In March, I was flying to Calcutta to consult with the USIS post there. During the flight, at just about the point where you can see Mount Everest on a clear day, I noticed that one passenger after another was buzzing for the stewardess. She would turn up at the passenger's seat, lean over to hear what the problem was, and then go forward to the pilots' compartment and let herself in. In a minute or so, she would come out and return to say something to the passenger. By then, the "stewardess" light was on again, over another passenger's seat. This was a puzzling activity that continued as more passengers summoned the stewardess.

I finally figured out what was happening. Final results of the election that Mrs. Gandhi had at last allowed were coming in on the radio in the pilots' compartment. Passengers were asking the stewardesses for the latest results, and the stewardesses were relaying the news, one passenger at a time. The excitement was provoked by the election results - Mrs. Gandhi and her Congress Party were losing. Morarji R. Desai, the opposition leader, won in a landslide, unseating the Congress Party, which had been dominant since "freedom at midnight" on August 15, 1947, when the Indian Empire was dissolved and India became independent.

The unexpected results of the election (Mrs. Gandhi, for one, certainly failed to anticipate what would happen) caused me to think again about "the world's two biggest democracies." A lot of Indians, many of them illiterate and living in poverty, had taken to heart the promise of democracy and gone to the polls to vote for what they thought was best for them. The election, and the defeat of the Congress Party for the first time since Indian independence, showed that democracy had indeed taken root in the subcontinent. Maybe I won't hesitate to use that phrase if I'm ever asked again to write a speech about India.

Q: How about the professional classes, the business people? How was our rapport with them?

HANEY: I would say, "good." They were eager to take advantage of technical advances from the United States. As a result, there is now a "Silicon Valley" in Bangalore/Hyderabad in southern India. Many Indians skilled in computers have come to the United States to work, a "brain drain" that is of concern to the mother country. American "outsourcing" of such skills more often ends up in India that anywhere else.

Q: How about the universities? Were we able to make much of a dent or were the universities hotbeds of Marxism, as they are in so many parts of the world?

HANEY: I wouldn't say they were "hotbeds of Marxism." We did have contacts there. USIA managed a cultural-exchange program involving both Indian and American students and professors, as well as professional men and women in cultural or social organizations. We had no trouble at all making that kind of contact.

Q: I often think that these exchange programs are probably the best thing we do across the board on the whole diplomatic scale.

HANEY: I agree.

Q: You left there when?

HANEY: In October '77.

Q: Where did you go?

HANEY: I came back to Washington, and we took some of the large amount of leave we had accumulated. Then I went back to work in USIA at odd jobs in policy. For a while, I was writing speeches for the USIA director, John Reinhardt.

Q: When did you retire?

HANEY: In 1980. I had been eager to get back overseas. A Foreign Service officer thinks that he should be abroad.

Q: And particularly in USIA. The real action is abroad.

HANEY: Yes. So upon my return from India, I immediately put in for a post, naming a couple that I thought I would like and find interesting. But personnel told me, "We're not sending you abroad again. You're going to be 60 years old [then the mandatory retirement age] in two years, and we couldn't get out of you the length of service abroad that we would like." So rather than walk the plank in two years, I jumped overboard and left at the beginning of 1980.

Q: You were working for John Reinhardt. What sort of things were you doing?

HANEY: Mostly speechwriting.

Q: Did you feel you were marking time?

HANEY: Yes, I was marking time. I did some science liaison with State for the USIA policy people. But I was really marking time. I knew I wasn't going overseas again.

Q: Alright. This is probably a good place to stop then.

HANEY: Yes.

Q: You've had some really very interesting posts.

HANEY: I was thinking about that the other day. I was thinking about somebody who had served only in Western Europe or Latin America. I wouldn't trade the posts we had for any other combination.

Q: Great. I want to thank you very much.

End of interview